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Stockman Stories



Stockman-Farmer Publishing Company
PITTSBURGH, PENN'A

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STOCKMAN STORIES



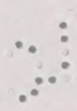
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STOCKMAN STORIES



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Margaret Sloan's Career.

By Caroline Abbot Stanley.

CHAPTER I.

"What's the matter with the kid?"

Dick Sloan had just come from town and stood lounging against the doorway of the hot kitchen. He looked curiously into the next room, where his little sister was sobbing her heart out on a weather-beaten old double lounge. She had thrown herself there in a passion of tears after watching a young cow led off at the hands of a neighbor.

"Oh, she's crying because pa sold the red heifer he was going to give her."

"~~That's what she's crying about~~" explained Mrs. Sloan. She was a spiritless woman with stooping shoulders and an

apologetic air. ~~It was her own fault~~ **THIS BOOK IS A COLLECTION OF SHORT**

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traction of ~~lessly—"May"~~ **IN THE NATIONAL STOCKMAN AND**

lessly—"May" ~~I don't~~ **FARMER, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

~~it back! He's an Indian giver!~~ snapped Mame. A girl at the ironing-table set down her iron with a thump. Her shoulders were straight enough and her soul undoubtedly her own.

"He'll take it back all right enough, Mame. You can depend upon that!" There was a bright red spot on her cheek and a scornful curve about her lips. "Giving a calf to a girl on this place means that it is hers till there is a market for it. Then it's pa's."

"Maggie!" remonstrated her mother with feeble, perfunctory loyalty. "ain't you ashamed to talk so about pa?"

The girl looked up defiantly from the garment she was ironing. She had out two irons and each piece had to be pressed long and hard. Her nerves were worn out.

"No," she said stoutly. "I'm not ashamed. It's the truth and you all know it. A colt or a calf or a pig given to one of the boys is his. The increase is his if he keeps it, the money is his if he sells it. But who ever heard of a girl in this family getting anything out of her livestock but the privilege of claiming it and naming it and loving it till her heart nearly breaks when she has to give it up? And she always does have to give it up. Poor little Mame is just finding that out. I've known it many a long year, ever since

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"Oh, she's crying because pa sold the red heifer he was going to give her. You know she's always claimed it," explained Mrs. Sloan. She was a spiritless woman with stooping shoulders and an apologetic air. People said Mrs. Sloan did not know her soul was her own. If she did she never asserted it—or anything else, in fact.

"Never mind, honey, don't cry!" coaxed her mother, sympathetic tears filling her own faded eyes—it is the shame of some parents that they never enter into their children's sorrows; it is the distraction of some others that they enter into them all, but helplessly—"Maybe pa'll give you another one sometime."

"I don't want him to give me another one if he is going to take it back! He's an Indian giver!" snapped Mamie.

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my cow was sold—my little Bossy that I thought was my own. I had seen my lamb and my pig and my colt go, but I did think I could keep the cow. Poor Mame!”

“Is that the reason you wouldn't have old Blaze's calf when pa gave it to you?” asked Dick curiously.

“Yes, it is. Since then I've stuck to kittens. They are the safest to put your affections on. Calves and colts and pigs for boys, but rag babies and cats for girls!” There was a bitter recklessness in her tone.

“That ain't because pa don't think as much of you girls as he does of the boys, honey. It is just because the boys have to get a start.”

There was a sound of a creaking board outside but they did not hear it.

“No,” said her daughter quietly, “it is because girls and their rights and their wants are not worth considering. I don't suppose pa has ever given the matter a moment's thought. Girls don't count on a farm—nor women, either, for that matter. Everything goes the men's way.”

“Of course they have the living to make—”

“I suppose we don't help to make the living! They couldn't do much without something to eat, I guess. And somebody has to get it—and to wash—and iron—and churn—and sweep and clean—and sew—and darn—”

“But that doesn't bring in money, after all.”

“It keeps money from going out, which is about the same thing. And our doing it keeps us from doing something that would bring in money. That's something to be remembered. Ethel says I could make lots of money in the city.”

“How?” asked Dick with uncomfortable directness.

“Plenty of ways.” Ethel was their summer visitor. She had been explicit as to the great amount of money to be made in Chicago, but vague as to how. Margaret had been discontented ever since her visit.

“Richard, help me off with this ham, please.” Mrs. Sloan hated argument. “My back is pretty bad today. The washing yesterday most finished me.”

Margaret jabbed the iron viciously into the gathers of the skirt she was ironing.

“If we had had that washing-machine that pa thinks we don't need your back would have been all right,” she said angrily. “He said when I begged him to buy it that he had no money to throw away on such foolishness. His mother raised ten children without a washing-machine and what was good enough for her would do for us! His mother! They always go back to their mothers—never to their fathers! I wanted to tell him that his father probably raised his ten children on a plow and a scythe, but his father's son has to

have cultivators and reapers and mowers and every modern convenience. But when we want a washing-machine or a wringer—my! How poor pa gets.”

“Margaret!” expostulated her mother.

“I don’t care, mother. I’m going to say it! It’s in me and it might as well come out! Everything is done on this place for the convenience of the men and nothing for the women! We work as hard as they do. Why shouldn’t we have something to work with? It’s not fair!”

“Pa does the best he can, honey. He was real good to get us that sewing machine. You mustn’t forget that.”

“I’m not likely to forget it,” said Margaret, drily, “I’m reminded of it every time we want anything else. And I never have seen why we should be so overcome with gratitude for the machine, anyway. We do all the family sewing. We had to have something to do it with. I never have seen Dick or Cy falling over himself with thankfulness to pa for being so good as to get a plow or a hoe when there’s one needed. It is just taken as a matter of course that if they need farm implements they will get them. But you know how we have to ding and ding at pa to get anything for the house.”

“It is hard,” admitted Mrs. Sloan, stooping to try the cracked oven to see if it had reached the baking point. She had had to get up an hour earlier every morning for ten years on account of that crack.

“We’ve needed a new cook-stove for a good many years—”

“We’ll never get it as long as this one has a leg. But if it was a piece of machinery they wanted they would find the money some way to buy it. It just makes me hot to see all the things the men have to work with and then look at this kitchen!”

It was bare enough, certainly—a cracked stove, a rickety drawerless table, and a tin “safe” that did duty as a cupboard and a refrigerator—being supplemented in this latter particular by the well, inside of which hung sundry buckets of milk at the imminent risk of the drinking water. Margaret was ironing a dress skirt at one end of the table while her mother made up biscuits on the other. Mr. Sloan had been promising them an ironing board ever since Margaret could remember, but he had never got it.

The girl put down her iron and tried the other.

“Cold!” She rolled up the half-ironed garment and threw it into the basket. “If there’s anything on earth more exasperating than to try to iron with two irons I don’t know what it is! I have tried for six years to get one more iron—just one—but pa never has enough money to get it. If I had three I could have finished by noon, and had time to cool the house off, and change my dress like white folks. But here it is nearly supper time and the ironing still dragging on, and I hot and tired—”

"And cross," suggested Dick, with opportune tact.

"Yes! And glad I can get cross! Anybody that wouldn't hasn't got the spirit of a mouse!"

"Did you get anything in town, Richard?" asked Mrs. Sloan, with the manifest intention of changing the subject.

"Got that trunk I've been thinking about so long and a suit of clothes."

"Dick Sloan!" His sister faced him with blazing eyes: "Have you got a new suit?"

"I have that," he replied, "and it's a dandy."

"Did pa give you the money?"

"It came out of what he allowed me for the summer's work."

It was the last straw and the camel's back was very weak.

"And I've worked like a dog all summer, and pa said he couldn't spare me three dollars to get a jacket with." The angry tears came to her eyes. "It's a shame! That's what it is! If I didn't have to stay here and work in this kitchen I could go where I could earn something for myself. I've a great mind to do it anyway! I think it is mean the way pa does about my clothes. I have to beg for every rag I put on!"

"Margaret! Margaret!"

There was no opportunity for a reply. The door was darkened by an angry man. Mr. Sloan had come from the sale of the cow with the agreeable consciousness of having made a good bargain. He told himself that he was a pretty good manager, anyway. He had been arrested on the porch by Margaret's first words. He had heard them all. For once the glass had been held up squarely before him. But he did not recognize the picture therein revealed as his own. This was a creature of Margaret's distorted fancy. And it angered him that his own daughter should sit in judgment upon him and his dealings with his family. He considered himself a generous man—"a good provider, a kind father, and an indulgent husband," as they say in obituaries. As to his being a just one—well, he had not thought much about that.

Mr. Sloan's temper was a slow fuse, but the explosive was reached with his daughter's threat of leaving home.

The three looked up at his entrance. Mrs. Sloan cowered behind Margaret, who stood her ground. Mamie forgot her grief in terror of the impending storm.

"So you think you're put upon, do you? And abused? And don't get your rights?" He spoke slowly and intensely. "And you think you can do better for yourself than your father has done for you all these years? Well! You can try it! I guess we can get along full as well without you as you can without us. There will be one less mouth to fill anyway."

Mrs. Sloan caught him by the arm, bold for once in the presence of danger to her offspring.

"Oh, pa! pa! don't!" she begged.

He shook her off. He was furious at her interference.

"I mean it!" he thundered. "She can go—the sooner the better! I don't want any whining woman around me!"

CHAPTER II.

Out of the Home Nest.

Margaret Sloan stood for a moment as one stunned. She had been thrust out! The opportunity she had longed for had come at last, but now that she grasped it, like many another coveted rose, the thorns hurt her.

She caught her breath sharply. The humiliation of it stung her to the quick. But the stubbornness that was a part of her father's nature had come down to her by ordinary inheritance. She was his own child—she had the very traits that he had given her—a thing fathers do not always consider.

She reached for the iron mechanically. She did not notice whether it was hot or cold.

"I will go as soon as possible, father," she said with a tightening of the throat. "I am sorry I have been a burden to you. I didn't know before that I was or I should have gone sooner."

Her lips trembled a little in spite of herself, but she shut them tight and held back her tears.

He might have told her truthfully that she was not a burden to him, that she was a dear good child and had always been. How much trouble it would have saved them all if he had! But the demon of obstinacy possessed him. Should he, her father, give up to a slip of a girl who was so ungrateful for all that had been done for her? He steeled his heart against her. Let her go and find out for herself when she was well off.

He went heavily into the dining-room and shut the door. For a few moments nothing was said. Then Dick got up and muttered something about going for wood, a thing he was not much given to doing, but in this crisis he felt the quickening conscience that comes with the presence of death or some great calamity. Mamie saw Cy coming and sped to tell him the dire news—Margaret was going away!

Mrs. Sloan lifted a distressed face to her daughter's.

"Honey," she began—

Margaret put up her hand. "Don't say anything to me now, mother. I've got to wait till after supper." She knew that in that talk there would be a break-down.

Cy looked curiously at her when he came in, but a look from his mother restrained the words that were on his lips. Even Mamie was under the general constraint.

It was a silent meal that they sat down to. They could think of nothing to say. Dick thought of his new suit, but clearly that wouldn't do. Mrs. Sloan's mind reverted to the recent sale, but that too was thin ice, so the meal was eaten in silence.

Even Mr. Sloan's satisfaction in his trade was affected by the general depression. He called Mamie to him after supper and took her on his knee. Nothing had been said about the cow but he knew it stood between them. And somehow he wanted to be at peace with Mamie.

"Pa's going to give you a Jersey calf instead of a heifer—that will be nice, won't it?"

Mamie's lips quivered. "I don't believe I'll take another calf," she said with downcast eyes.

Her father looked at her with lowering brow. "Ah! you've got it too, have you?" He laughed a little unpleasantly. "All right. You needn't take the calf if you don't want to."

The child waited a moment and then slid gently from his knee. He felt distinctly repelled. Mamie had taken sides with Margaret. He had lost both his daughters.

It was not until Margaret was in bed, with Mamie asleep beside her, that Mrs. Sloan had her talk. She came into the moonlighted room, as the girl knew she would, and sat down on the side of the bed.

"Margaret, child," she said. Then they wept it out in each other's arms. The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches sometimes clog up the way to paternal sympathy, but mothers' hearts, thank God, are usually where their children can get at them.

They talked it all over. Mrs. Sloan, divided between wifely allegiance and motherly tenderness, tried to make smooth the rough places. It could not be done. A father's harsh words cannot be taken back by a pitiful mother. Truly

"Words are wonderful things;

They are sweet like the bees' own honey,

Like the bees they have terrible stings."

With the strange perversity of wounded pride which usually seizes on the one untrue thing that is said—the one thing that could be so easily recalled—Margaret held in her memory that stinging sentence, "There will be one less mouth to fill." Her father felt her to be a burden! He grudged her the food she ate! And she had never suspected it.

Why will people say things they do not mean, when they are angry? And why, when they know them to be untrue, will they not hasten to take them back? Alas! alas! why?

"But, child, where will you go?"

It was the question that Mrs. Sloan had been asking herself

in agonizing fear. The world seems such a confusing place to a woman whose horizon has been bounded by the cornfield, the store and the country church.

Margaret Sloan had much of her father's resolution. Even in this brief time she had thought out her plan. After what had passed, staying at home was not to be thought of. Perhaps it was a good thing, hard as it was, that this had come. She would never have had the courage or the opportunity to try her wings, otherwise. After that first burst of tears on her mother's breast and the comfort of her sympathy her spirits began to rise. As she detailed her plan she felt surer of herself and it.

She would go to Ethel's first. Ethel had often urged her to come to the city to visit them and so had her mother, not quite so insistently, perhaps, but cordially to say the least. Once in the city, with time to look around and a pleasant safe home to stay in till she could find something to do, she felt sure of success. Ethel had said there were so many opportunities in the city.

They would probably want her to board with them after she found work. She would insist upon paying board no matter what they said. Margaret was already beginning to build air castles. It would certainly be pleasant to step right into Ethel's social circle. What young girl would not think with delight of a winter in the city?

"I don't know about your staying so very long at Mrs. Montessor's," said Mrs. Sloan with some hesitation.

"Why, mother, they come here and stay weeks and weeks at a time, and we've never been there."

"I know—but in the city it's different. It isn't always convenient to have company."

"It isn't always convenient in the country. Sometimes it is very inconvenient. The last time Mrs. Montessor and Ethel were here we were in the midst of harvest and it was very inconvenient to have company. But we never let them know it. Besides, they've told me to come at any time that suited me. Of course they wouldn't say it unless they meant it."

"N-o, I guess not," said Mrs. Sloan doubtfully. She was easily overborne.

"I'm more disturbed about money than I am about my welcome," said Margaret. "I've got to have enough to get my ticket and have a little left for car fares even if I don't get anything new, and my old jacket really—"

"Of course you'll have to have money!" Her mother spoke with unwonted spirit. "I'll speak to pa myself." She did before she slept—with a plainness of speech and directness of aim that took that good man's breath away. Just what passed in that conjugal interview will never be known, for the next morning Mrs. Sloan was the same meek little woman as of old, but that night

she was a lioness robbed of her young. The result of it was that Mr. Sloan put two ten-dollar bills into Margaret's hands the morning she was to go.

"I guess this won't be more than you'll need," he said, with the half-formed notion of telling her to send to him for more if she needed it.

Margaret took his hesitation for regret at giving up the money.

"If it is I'll send the rest back," she said quickly, her color rising.

The two days that followed that night's talk were busy ones. There was an excursion going to Chicago on Friday, the last of the season. She must be sure to catch that. There was no time to write to Ethel and the Sloans never telegraphed except in case of death.

"I'll get along all right," said Margaret. "I have Ethel's address, and I know they take a Madison street car. I'll ask the conductor where to get off."

"You'd better ask some of the passengers," advised her mother uneasily, with that dread of officials which seems inherent in the non-traveling public, "the conductor most likely will take you out of the neighborhood. They say they are always trying to take people wrong. I'd ask some good motherly looking woman!"

It was well for them both that the time was fully occupied. As Margaret gathered together her modest wardrobe she began to have doubts as to whether it would be equal to the demands upon it in Ethel's home. Ethel always dressed well. Of course she could buy things when she got work—but suppose she couldn't get work. Her courage, which had been strong as long as her resentment lasted, began to dribble away. Mrs. Sloan's had never risen. She was full of gloomy forebodings of what might befall Margaret, and it took all the girl's will-power to keep up a brave front.

Somehow these common everyday things around her seemed so much dearer to her now that she was giving them up. She took surreptitious journeys to the pig pen and cow lot to say goodbye to her dumb family.

And how would her mother—her dear patient mother—get along without her help? Then her father's words came back to her—"I guess we'll get along full as well without you as you will without us," and she shut her teeth together. If she didn't get along without them nobody should ever know it!

As the time drew near for her to go there was an unwonted thoughtfulness of Margaret's comfort. Never in her life had she had so many things done for her. If she had only known all this time that they cared so much for her! Strange how we wait for death or separation to bring about a show of affection.

Dick in a spasm of generosity, followed, it must be admitted,

by a sub-spasm of regret, took his new suit from his shining zinc trunk and insisted that Margaret should take that instead of her old one that had been her mother's. Cy motioned her around the house and when they were safely out of sight took from his pocket three silver dollars and put them into her hand.

"Here, Mag, I want you to get you a jacket with this. And get a good one while you are about it." Three dollars looked large to Cy as it did to Margaret.

"And say, Mag," Cy tried to look unconscious and failed most signally, "I told Jeff Heminway about your going, and he said that he was going to town tomorrow and he'd drive by and take you in his buggy—said he'd save us the trouble of hitching up the wagon." Cy grinned. "I told him we was awful busy and seeing as he was going anyway I guessed we'd take him up."

Margaret's color had risen at the mention of Jeff Heminway's name. She had thought she must go without seeing him.

"Cy," she said earnestly, "you didn't tell him about pa and all that—"

"You bet I didn't! I told him you was about dead to get a squint at city folks and learn city ways and we'd about made up our minds that we'd have to let you go."

Margaret drew a relieved breath. Anything was better than that Jeff should know the humiliating truth.

In the tray of the trunk, securely wrapped in many papers, Mrs. Sloan had placed a loaf of soft gingerbread.

"This is for Mrs. Montessor," she explained. "She always set such store by my hot gingerbread."

Secretly it was a relief to Mr. Sloan when it was announced that Jeff was coming by for Margaret. He had dreaded that ride with his daughter, and yet he would not allow himself to shirk it by sending one of the boys.

Nobody was very hungry for dinner and Jeff came before it was over.

"We haven't any too much time," he called, and the little zinc trunk was hurriedly brought down and put in the back of the buggy. The goodbyes were soon said. Mrs. Sloan retreated into the folds of her cook apron and Mamie into her mother's gathers.

"Goodbye, pa." She knew Jeff's eyes were upon her, she could feel it.

Mr. Sloan stooped and kissed her in his clumsy way. It was in his heart to tell her to come home when her visit was over, her place was always ready for her—but Jeff hurried her into the buggy and the words were unsaid. And what is unsaid may as well be unthought so far as the other person is concerned.

Mamie ran ahead to open the big gate. She had something hidden in her apron. It was a little basket. She thrust it into Margaret's hands as the horse started. Margaret opened the lid,

There lay a little white kitten with a blue ribbon around its neck. Tied to this was a card on which Mamie had written with labor and tears, "For you to love, Mame."

And Margaret's tears could no longer be kept back.

That ride was a disappointment to them both.

There was time to say so much and so little was said. Jeff Heminway was a sensible, thrifty farmer lad, who in his heart hoped that he would some day have Margaret in his own home. He had done well with his crop this year and was planning to put up a modest little house before long and ask her to share it with him. This sudden news about her going to the city to "learn city ways" had put an abrupt stop to his dreams. If she had that in her head it was hardly worth while for him to say anything. He felt disappointed in her too. A girl who would go away and leave her mother when she so needed her was hardly the one he would want to tie to, he told himself. And now he grew taciturn.

Margaret was quick to feel the chill from this shadow. But the lower her spirits sank the gayer grew her laugh. She talked fast and animatedly about the future before her. "He shall never know," she thought with an inward sob.

And so the barriers were built up by their own hands.

"I can't take this thing with me," said Margaret, half laughing, half crying, as she took up the kitten. They had reached the station.

Jeff took the basket and put it under the seat. "I'll keep it," he said. A vision rose before him of a cozy kitchen, a purring cat, and a face that looked like Margaret's. Just a moment and it was gone.

He told her goodbye in the most matter-of-fact way. He had just come to save her father a trip, that was all!

"All aboard!" The bell rang, the familiar features of Polk Summit were slowly receding. Margaret looked back through a mist of tears. She could just see Jeff turning from her. Now he was gone. She gave a sob. She was out in the world! the wide, wide world!

CHAPTER III.

Society at Second Hand.

It was not a very long distance in miles from Polk Summit to Chicago. Margaret began to have a terrified consciousness that she was in the suburbs long before she wanted to be. She had intended to think things out well on the journey. But it seemed to her that she had barely had time to plan how self-possessed she would be before the ordeal was upon her.

It began with the transfer man.

"Baggage? baggage?" he said, looking from one side to the other. "Baggage delivered to any part of the city. Baggage, lady?"

She watched him with fascinated interest mixed with dread and indecision. She saw women—and men too—give up their checks to him with the utmost unconcern, some of them even with a look of relief. She got hers out. Others—usually men, Margaret noticed—would let him go by with a shake of the head. Then she would think, "Now that man won't trust him," and she would put her check back. Jeff had told her not to give it up until she got to the depot. Still the others were doing it—and what would she do with her trunk when she got there?

The man was coming nearer; she must decide. She leaned over and spoke timidly to a woman across the aisle, remembering her mother's caution.

"Would you dare to give up your check to that man if you were me?" she asked.

"Why certainly! It's Parmelee's Transfer Co. It is perfectly reliable. You do just what he tells you."

Margaret drew a relieved breath, and handed over her check. A half dollar seemed a great deal to pay. She thought once of saying it was a small trunk and wouldn't he take a quarter, but he was so business-like that she concluded not to.

She was at the door with her valise long before the train pulled into the station. There were others there too—women with bird cages and bouquets of garden flowers in their hands, and men with large slick valises, and a perturbed air. The old travelers kept their seats and avoided the rush.

When the porter helped her down Margaret stood for a moment bewildered. Then she noticed that everybody was hastening one way.

"I'll follow the crowd," she thought.

The crowd took her to the pavement above. A courteous official and Parmelee's bus did the rest. The ease and celerity with which it was accomplished nearly took her breath away, the truth being that things are so systematized in a large city for the convenience and safe transfer of the traveling public that there

is far less delay or danger of going astray or annoyance in getting to one's destination than in a small country town.

It was nearly dusk when the bus drove up to Montessor's door. The house seemed to Margaret much more imposing because it stood in a block. She stood a moment looking down the avenue at the converging lines of street lamps. How beautiful they were! Then she made her way up the long flight of stone steps, valise in hand, and rang the bell. She looked gayly up at the windows, hoping to get sight of Ethel. When she heard footsteps she prepared to make a spring at her, not doubting that it would be her friend. The door was opened by a maid who looked her over swiftly and held the knob.

"I don't think she can see you," she said when Margaret asked for Ethel. "They are giving a party tonight. But I'll see. What name, please?"

She closed the door after being told and went off, leaving Margaret standing outside, much astonished and not a little chagrined at this reception. Wouldn't Ethel or Mrs. Montessor give it to that girl if they knew how she had treated a guest!

Then she thought of the party. She would have an opportunity of meeting Ethel's friends the very first thing. She wondered if her trunk would get there in time—it was getting almost dark—and felt glad that she had put in her mother's black silk skirt to wear with her changeable silk waist. Mrs. Sloan had pressed it upon her, saying it was as good as new, for she hadn't worn it over five or six times since it was made, ten years ago.

Her name produced no small commotion in Ethel's bedroom.

"Well, of all people in the world!" ejaculated Mrs. Montessor.

"And of all times!" exclaimed Ethel, despairingly. "If she had only waited till tomorrow!"

"Why in the world didn't that stupid thing tell her we were 'not at home'?" said Mrs. Montessor, with impatience.

The "stupid thing" had in the meantime gone down with the message that Miss Montessor would be down in a minute.

"Who is it?" asked Lilian Barrows, who was visiting Ethel. In fact, the party was in her honor.

"Oh, it's a little country girl from Polk Summit, where Ethel and I sometimes go for the summer."

Mrs. Montessor did not say that they had visited at the house of this "little country girl" for weeks together. "She's a very nice child, but—to think of her coming here without even a letter—and tonight of all times!"

"Of course we'll have to ask her down," said Ethel, "and she'll be dressed like Mrs. Noah—or the people of Polk Summit—"

"Which is worse," affirmed Mrs. Montessor, grimly. "Well, we'll just have to make the best of it."

In the meantime, the maid had ushered Margaret into the

parlor and left her there. She sat uneasily on the edge of the sofa, her feet resting on the soft pile of the Axminster carpet, and looked around. It seemed to her like fairy land.

Everything was in readiness for the party and the rooms looked like a bower. The mantel and grate were banked with potted plants, the fretwork over the doors (which Margaret had never seen before) and the chandeliers were twined with smilax, that most festive and adaptable of vines, and the parlor glowed with magnificent American Beauties. Margaret thought they were peonies until she noticed the rose leaves. Then she thought, "Of course they are artificial."

Beyond the hall she caught a glimpse of the dining-room, as she supposed from the table in the center of the room, though it did not look much like any dining-room she had ever seen before. From the chandelier were draped four wide pink satin ribbons to the four corners of the table where they were held by silver candelabra, bearing aloft wax candles of the same roseate hue. In the center was a mirror—a round one—which reflected the pink faces of the drooping chrysanthemums and the gleam of the cut glass vase until the whole seemed a glowing mass of light and color half hidden by the feathery plumosa.

She could not see anything to eat, but the sheen of damask and satin, the glitter of cut glass, the exquisite combination of colors, and above it all the chastened light of low-burning gas, filled her soul with an intoxicating sense of delight.

Margaret pinched herself. Was it possible that it was really she? And she had stepped right into the midst of this beautiful life! She was going to be a part of it. How poor and mean her own home seemed by comparison! She reddened at the thought of how it must have seemed to Ethel and Mrs. Montessor when they had been there.

While she sat drinking it all in, hardly daring to move for fear she would wake up and find herself back at Polk Summit, she heard a flutter on the stairs and Ethel was beside her.

"Why, how do you do, Margaret?" she said sweetly. "I'm awful glad to see you!"

They went up stairs in a few minutes, and Mrs. Montessor gave the girl a faultlessly polite greeting. She took the ends of Margaret's fingers in her own, raised her hand gracefully to the level of her chin, and gave the conventional wiggle. Then she presented her cheek to be kissed. Margaret was never more disconcerted in her life. It must be admitted that it was an extremely mortifying thing not to know how to shake hands! It is such foolish little things as these—unfamiliarity with conventional forms which do not bear the remotest relation, necessarily, to good breeding—that make one ill at ease in stepping from provin-

cial to city life. One is so apt to overestimate their importance. Margaret did, and felt awkward enough.

"This is my friend Miss Barrows, Margaret. Miss Sloan, Lillian." To Margaret's great surprise a friendly hand was held out and a frank, natural clasp met hers. With ready tact Lillian Barrows saw the girl's embarrassment and set her at ease.

"I am glad to meet you, Miss Sloan. It seems that we are both Ethel's friends." Her frank, cordial way drew Margaret to her at once.

"Won't you take off your things, Margaret?" asked Mrs. Montessoro affably. It struck the poor child like a blow. It seemed to intimate the possibility that she might not expect to.

She took off her things and laid them on the bed. As she did so a vision of beauty met her eyes. Laid out on the bed were two exquisite dresses, one white, the other pink. Margaret had never dreamed of anything half so beautiful.

"They are our dresses for tonight," said Ethel, exhibiting them with some natural pleasure. "How do you like them?"

"They are the prettiest things I ever saw," Margaret said frankly.

"Did you bring an evening gown?" said Ethel somewhat fearfully. "Your trunk will get here in time, don't you think?"

"Oh, I shouldn't think of going down," said Margaret decidedly. She had one insane moment of dreaming that the changeable silk waist and brocaded skirt would do, but it was before she had seen the two filmy creations on the bed. The country girl might not understand the fashionable way of shaking hands, but she had good, sound sense, and as we have seen was not lacking in spirit.

Emboldened by her positive refusal, Ethel urged her to come down in whatever she had with her, greatly to the surprise of Lillian who had heard the previous discussion of the subject. But Margaret was firm.

Rid of her fears, Ethel became quite like her old Polk Summit self and Margaret was very happy helping them dress. She was really so deft and handy that Ethel was struck with a sudden thought. Their second girl had left in a huff the day before.

"Say, Margaret, how would you like to be in the dressing-room while they are coming? It seems too bad for you not to see any of the party, and there you could get a good look at the dresses, anyway."

"Will you be there? I suppose you will have to come up with them." Margaret had never been at a party where the hostess had not personally escorted each guest to the dressing-room and helped her off with her things.

"Oh, no, I'll be receiving—Lillian and I."

"Who would introduce me?" asked Margaret.

Ethel caught Lillian's eye and gave an embarrassed laugh.

"Oh, you won't need any introduction—they will be coming so fast. I just thought it would be nice for you to see the dresses."

"It would," said Margaret gratefully, "you are real kind to think of it. I'd like to if you think it would look all right." Then she thought "I'll wear my blue serge as I'm not going down stairs."

Her trunk had been taken to a little back room, Mrs. Montessor explaining that Lilian stayed with Ethel and the other guest room was needed for a dressing-room. It was a bare little place and Margaret wondered that there should be such a difference in the two guest chambers.

When she came out Ethel met her with something white in her hands. She had been talking with her mother and Margaret heard her say in a low tone, "She won't know."

"Say, Mag, try these on." She tied a dainty muslin apron around her waist and pinned a fluffy bunch of white lace on her head. It looked to Margaret almost like a cap.

"There! Now look at yourself! Doesn't that lighten up your dark dress?"

It did, certainly. It was a very fair reflection that met her gaze.

"Doesn't it make her look pretty, Lilian?"

"It is certainly very becoming," said Lilian Barrows, gravely. Then she added, "Suppose we go down stairs, Miss Sloan, and take a look at things before anybody comes. Would you like to?"

She slipped her arm in Margaret's and they went down the stairway together.

"Have you known Ethel long?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, they come out to visit us nearly every summer. They usually spend a month with us," said Margaret.

"Ah!" thought Miss Barrows. "That's it!"

They made the tour of the rooms. Margaret touched the roses and almost jumped. "Why, they're real!" she said.

When they went to the dining-room a new thought came to her.

"I wonder if I can't help Mrs. Montessor when she is dishing up," she said. "I believe I'll ask her."

"I think I wouldn't," said Miss Barrows gently. "She has a caterer and they always bring their own assistants, you know."

"Oh," said Margaret. She was glad somehow that she had spoken of it to Lilian instead of Ethel.

When they began coming, Margaret took her place. She felt a little awkward at first, but nobody paid any attention to her and the feeling soon wore off. She certainly enjoyed the dresses!

They were quite friendly, she thought, for city girls, and often asked her to help them just as if they had always known her. They did not seem to stand on introductions at all. Sometimes they thanked her and sometimes to her surprise they handed her their

things almost as a matter of course. She did not like that very well.

One young lady turned to her and said, "I wish you would lace up my shoes, please," and Margaret knelt down with a flaming face. This was carrying friendliness too far.

When they were all gone down she went to the head of the stairs above the landing where she could look through the balustrades. She was greatly interested in it for a while. Then she began to wish there was somebody to enjoy it with her. It was rather lonely. They all seemed to be having a fine time, but after all—she was not in it. At Polk Summit, she thought with a sudden homesick throb, she would have been the center of it all.

She sat there a long time watching the dancing with an undercurrent of Polk Summit in her mind. None of these men were as good-looking as Jeff. She thought Ethel might have come to see how she was getting along. She began to feel hungry. She had eaten hardly any dinner and Mrs. Montessor had not asked her to have supper. At home they always asked people if they had been to supper. Nobody ever went hungry to bed there. They hadn't seemed so very glad to see her. A little bit of a tear stole down her cheek.

Just then two ladies started up the stairs, one with a torn dress. Margaret retreated to the dressing-room, but they came straight on.

"Oh, here's the maid now," said one. "My good girl, will you get a needle and thread and catch up this flounce?"

"The maid! My good girl!" As by a lightning flash Margaret saw the whole thing. She had been tricked into being her friend's maid! The cap and apron were the badge—and Ethel had put them on her, laughing doubtless at her ignorance! She hardly waited for the lady's thanks, but flew to her own room. She felt angry and hurt and humiliated. She would be the maid no longer. They might get their own things!

She tore off the offending cap and apron. She was going straight to bed! As she put away her dress she came across the loaf of gingerbread that was to be given to Mrs. Montessor. She took it out. She was famished. And as she looked at it it seemed like the touch of her mother's hand, her dear good mother! Then the homesick tears came.

CHAPTER IV.

Realization vs. Anticipation.

It was late when Margaret awoke the morning after the party, but there was no sound in the house. She lay still, trying to think it all out. Her fierce resentment of the night before had passed away, but there was a hurt feeling still. It was a mean trick Ethel had played her.

The more she thought of it, however, the more clearly she saw that she was not in a position to resent it, and that the best thing for her to do was to ignore it entirely. They hadn't given her the welcome she expected; Ethel had not proved the friend she had thought her; but such as they were they were the only ones she had in the city. It wouldn't do to break with them.

Margaret was learning discretion, certainly. She had found with bitter experience that it is a bad thing to quarrel with one's bread and butter. But in the meantime she would lose no time in finding work.

Before breakfast a letter was written to her mother in which she told of the party, Mrs. Montessor's beautiful home, the decorations, the dresses, which she said she had a fine opportunity to inspect (this with a grim smile as she wrote), of Ethel's friend who was so nice, etc., etc., but never a word of her own humiliation and homesickness.

Mrs. Sloan read the letter to Jeff Heminway the first time he came over. "She's all taken up with it," she said, with rather a pathetic smile. Jeff shut his lips together. "She's not the girl I took her for," he was thinking.

Margaret had hoped to start out that very morning. She was eager to see what she could do. But there was the party to be talked over, and the house to put to rights, and she saw that nobody had any time to talk to her. If she only had someone to advise with, that was really interested. Chicago was so big! To start out to look for work without even knowing what she wanted to do was hopeless! It seemed far more difficult to Margaret than when she was in the shelter of her own home. It is always easy to find gold at the end of the rainbow when one is at the other end!

It was several days before she could make her start. The girls were in the midst of a maelstrom of party calls, and there was no time for serious conference. In the meantime, she searched the papers and thought hard. When at last the opportunity came for a talk with Mrs. Montessor, that lady had nothing in the world to suggest. Finding work was entirely beyond her sphere. Her ideas were as vague as Margaret's.

"What did you think of doing?" she asked.

Margaret had thought of getting a place as a companion. She had read of girls who had done that—mainly in cheap story papers,

she was obliged to confess to herself, come to think of it.

Mrs. Montessor shook her head. "I know plenty of people who want servants," she said with a frankness that was almost brutal under the circumstances, "but nobody who wants a companion."

"I'm a pretty good nurse," suggested Margaret. She had nursed her mother through a spell of malarial fever once, and had often been called upon to sit up with a sick neighbor.

"That's more practical," said the elder lady. "I could give you a note to our doctor. Perhaps he can give you something."

"I've noticed several calls for nurses in the papers," continued Margaret. "Here are two I cut out."

"You might try them. It would do no harm anyway."

So Margaret started out, armed with two advertisements and a note to Dr. Warren.

When she reached the first place there was crape on the door. No use to try there now. The second was in another part of the city entirely. It took her nearly all the afternoon to get there.

Margaret stated her business to the girl who came to the door, and in a few minutes a tired-looking lady came into the room.

"You look very young," she said, "are you a trained nurse?"

"No-o," faltered Margaret, "but I nursed my mother through—"

"Yes. I think you would hardly do. It was a trained nurse I wanted. You will excuse me now? I am very busy." And Margaret found herself courteously dismissed.

She decided to take her note to Dr. Warren. She might better have gone there in the first place.

She was shown into the outer office and asked to wait. There were many others there.

When it came her turn she was trembling with nervousness. She had begun to realize what it is to take the time of a busy physician.

Dr. Warren read Mrs. Montessor's note. Then he turned to Margaret in a business-like way.

"Let me see your testimonials."

"Testimonials—I haven't—I did not know—"

"Ah! Well—never mind. What school are you from?"

"I have only been to the district school," poor Margaret stammered. "But we had a real good—"

"I mean training school. I don't care anything about your education—I want to know where you received your professional training."

"I never had any," Margaret confessed.

He turned his chair around abruptly. "Then of course you have no hospital practice?"

She shook her head. She was beginning to realize that nursing

was a different thing from what she had supposed. She was ready to sink under the doctor's keen gaze.

He turned to the note. "Mrs. Montessor recommends you as a good, experienced nurse," he said, sternly.

Margaret turned a flushed, disturbed face towards him. She felt that she had done a dishonest thing.

"Indeed sir," she said earnestly, "I did not mean to deceive you. I am not used to city ways. I—I did not know that one had to do all those things before she could be a nurse. I have always been very handy in the sick-room, and I had to do something."

Dr. Warren was a kind man and a reader of character. He saw that she spoke the truth.

"I see. You did not know the difference between a trained nurse and a friendly neighbor. Your kind of nursing was all right where you came from because it is the best they have. But when you come to the city you enter into competition with women who have given years of study to nursing as a profession, under the best instructors, with practice in the foremost hospitals in the land. You could not do anything at nursing in Chicago, my child. Better go back to your country home. You are too young to be in the city without work,"—and too pretty, he was thinking.

Margaret rose. "I am very much obliged to you for explaining it to me," she said, humbly. "I won't try it any more, I think."

She went outside. That door was closed!

"Well!" said Mrs. Montessor, when Margaret told of the interview, "if Dr. Warren can't do anything more to accommodate me than that, I think I will change my doctor!"

"I can see now that he was right," Margaret said in talking it over with the girls, "but I never thought of it before. I'm not a nurse."

"What do you think you will try next?" asked Ethel after a pause.

"I am going to try to get a place as amanuensis." She had thought it out on her way home. "I know I can do that."

"There are lots of offices on Dearborn Street. I'd try there if I were you."

"I'll give you a letter of introduction to a lawyer I know," suggested Lilian. "If he has anything I know he will give it to you." She blushed as she said it. "But—Margaret—wouldn't it be better to say copyist instead of amanuensis?" She spoke doubtfully, afraid of offending.

"I don't see why," returned Margaret. "That's a good word. I've often seen it in books."

"Yes," admitted Lilian, "in books. Well, maybe it is all right."

Margaret started off next morning with Dearborn Street in her head, a dainty scented note to the lawyer in her hand, and hope springing in her heart.

She got off the car at Dearborn. "I'll try the Monadnock first," she thought, making her way to the Dearborn Street entrance. Margaret had never seen an elevator, but Ethel had told her about it and she took her place before the iron grating where some men were standing. She hardly knew whether to risk it or not. While she was hesitating the elevator stopped.

"Up?" said the boy. The men stepped inside and Margaret followed. She hadn't the faintest idea where she would get off.

"Third," said one man. "Fourth," another. "Sixth." They went on and on, past one floor after another. "Twelfth. Thirteenth." Everybody was out but her. "Fourteenth. Fifteenth." The boy looked around. Should she tell him to stop? She was half dazed by the rapidity of the ascent. There was no time in this hurrying place to think.

"Seventeenth. This is the last floor, lady. Do you get out here?"

"I want to get out where the offices are," said Margaret.

The boy puckered his lips as if he wanted to whistle, but he spoke respectfully. "These are all offices, lady. There's thousands of them right here in this building."

"I think I will go down," said Margaret, with a vague thought of working her way up through the thousands.

When they started down Margaret clutched the boy. "Oh!" she gasped. It seemed to her that the bottom was dropping out of everything. "What's happened?"

"It's all right," he said cheerfully, "you'll get used to it."

"Let me off at the second floor," she said when she could get her breath. She would get as near to the ground as possible.

She waited a few moments to recover her equilibrium and then knocked timidly at the first door.

"Do you want an amanuensis?" she asked the man who appeared.

"Beg pardon?"

She repeated the question.

"No," he said, courteously, "we do not."

At the next door a voice called out, "Come in!" She opened a door and peered through a cloud of smoke. A young man with his feet on the table was talking to two other men.

"Well,—" he said, without changing his position.

"Would you like to employ an amanuensis?" asked the girl. She was very much disconcerted at his rudeness.

He put his hand to his ear.

"A which?"

The men half smiled.

"An amanuensis," repeated Margaret distinctly. Her face was very red.

"Well, no," he drawled, gravely. "We employ an amanuensis about every other day, but you see this is our off day."

Margaret retreated precipitately. She heard them laugh and her cheeks burned. She thought of the time Jeff Heminway thrashed a boy for saying something impudent to her, and she swallowed hard to get the lump in her throat down.

But at the next place she asked if they had any copying to do. No, the man said, he had his own typewriter.

When she knocked at the fourth door the man said, "Copying? I don't know,—what typewriter do you use?"

"I do it by hand," she answered. "Here are a few specimens of my writing." She held out some slips of paper on which she had written in her best Spencerian hand:

"Procrastination is the thief of time."

"Honesty is the best policy."

"Time is money."

She had felt in writing them that such sentiments must appeal to the business heart.

The man did not look at them. "I should have to have typewritten copy," he said, closing the door.

It was the same wherever she went, said in different words and with varying degrees of civility, but it all meant the same thing.

She went to a dozen or more places and then stopped and looked up and down the corridor. She had just made a beginning—on one floor—and there were seventeen! The boy had said there were thousands in that building! There must be copying to do among so many! But the conviction was fastening upon her that the trouble was in herself. They did not want her kind of copying any more than her kind of nursing in the city. She felt dizzy.

"I think I will go to Miss Barrows' friend," she thought. She was glad to get out in the air.

Lilian had told her to send the note in to the lawyer. She knew it would secure an audience at any rate. He came to the outer office almost immediately.

"Ah, Miss Sloan," he said cheerfully—that note from Miss Barrows had sent a kindly glow through his whole being—"you are just in the nick of time. I am wanting someone right away. What is your greatest speed?"

"Sir?"

"What is the best you can do in a minute?"

Margaret was completely mystified. "I don't quite understand what you mean," she said in a perplexed way.

"Aren't you a stenographer?" The note had asked for copying.

"No, sir."

"Just a typewriter, eh?" His tone showing that he was much disappointed. "Well—what machine do you use?"

"The Singer," answered Margaret, wondering what that had to do with the matter.

He looked at her sharply. Was she dull or trying to be smart? Neither, apparently.

"What typewriter machine do you use?" he asked a little sternly.

"I don't use any at all," she replied, the tears springing to her eyes. Here was another disappointment. And she had felt sure she was going to get it! "I write by hand. Here are some specimens of my writing."

"Yes," he said, looking at them and then at her. She was a pretty girl and he a young man. He felt sorry for her. "They are very good indeed. But I am afraid you will hardly be able to find work of your kind in Chicago. Hand work is almost entirely superseded by the typewriter, which is so much easier and quicker to read. And it is hard for even a typewriter to get a position worth having unless she has a knowledge of stenography. If you go into an office building you will find that every firm has its own stenographer."

"I think I might—what is the price of the machines?" asked Margaret, with a desperate determination.

"Ours cost a hundred dollars."

The girl rose. It might as well have cost a million.

"I will not take any more of your time," she said in a husky voice. She was repeating to herself mechanically the words on her slip, "Time is money." "Not always," she thought.

She went out onto the street—the crowded, jostling Chicago street. Everybody was hurrying so! It made her tired to try to keep up. And yet she found herself rushing along like the rest. "I will never be able to keep up with the procession!" she thought bitterly.

The throng confused her. She felt more alone than she had ever felt away out on the prairies. There is nothing to equal the terrible isolation of a multitude. There was not a soul in all that city that cared whether she lived or died! Even Mrs. Montessor and Ethel did not seem to feel any interest in her success—they were so taken up with their own affairs. "Nobody cares much about you in this world but your own folks," thought Margaret with a pang. She had cut herself off from her own folks!

She was passing a blind man with a hand-organ which wailed out the strains of "Home, Sweet Home." Margaret pulled down her veil and winked hard. It touched her in a tender spot just then.

CHAPTER V.

The Wide, Wide World.

It was weeks before Margaret Sloan found work. The stock of money that seemed so large to her on the farm seemed to dribble away a nickel at a time on car fares. It takes so much for car-fares in the city and it seems to count for so little!

Margaret determined not to spend Cy's gift for a jacket, but to save it—for a greater need if one should arise. She had got to the point now when she cared little for appearance, for she seldom went out except on her tramps for employment. It was not so much Ethel's neglect as her own independence and good sense that kept them from going out together. She realized with a sharpness that took away the pain of it that clothes of themselves are sometimes a dividing line between friends, and that without anybody's being to blame. She did not want to go out with Ethel any more than Ethel wanted to have her. She looked at her friend's elegant sealskin jacket and then at her own old cloak and stayed at home voluntarily. But "Work! work! oh, Lord, send me work!" was her hourly cry.

It grew more importunate as the days went by. Mrs. Montessor needed the room that Margaret occupied and hinted broadly to the girl that she thought this foolish idea of a career had better end sensibly in her going back home where she was sure she must be needed. And how could Margaret tell her that the doors of that home were closed upon her?

"I believe I will write to her mother and suggest her sending for her," Mrs. Montessor said to Ethel one day after a talk with Margaret. "She is the most hard-hearted, obstinate creature I ever saw." And relations became a little strained between the two, which did not tend to make Margaret's position any more endurable. She felt that she had a bare shelter for her head. Her welcome, scant as it was at first, was long since outstayed.

She was out from morning till night following up every clue. Unfortunately, it was at the time of the great financial depression a few years ago. Even men were walking the streets of Chicago begging for work. It was the same old story everywhere she went. Everybody was laying off help instead of taking on more. Nobody seemed to want her kind of work, which was not surprising since she knew but one thing well and that one she was not willing to do.

"I don't mind doing housework at home," she thought, "but I can't—oh, I can't—go into anybody's kitchen!"

She was not sure but she would be driven to it, for when she devoured the advertising sheet she could not help seeing that the column headed "Wanted—Situations," was filled with petitions from anxious applicants who were willing to do anything and everything

but housework, and that the "Wanted—Help" column was full of the pleas of weary housewives who wanted nothing else.

It must be dreadful, she thought, to be a servant in a stranger's house. But how easy and natural for a girl to do housework in her own home! If she were only working beside her own dear mother now instead of walking these dreadful Chicago streets where everybody hurried so! But—

She put down the paper then. She could not see the advertisements.

It was on a day of utter desperation that Margaret found employment at last. She had gone at random, as she had done many other times, into a store and asked for work. Yes, the man said he did need a girl for the basement stock at once. He did not tell her it was to take the place of an experienced girl who was sick. It would not have made any difference if he had. She was ready to take what was offered if but for a day. Still, she confidently supposed it was a permanent thing.

She went home with flying feet. Mrs. Montessoro elevated her aristocratic eyebrows a little at hearing the location and asked if she would not need to be nearer to the store.

"Yes," Margaret said calmly, "I am going to look for a boarding-house immediately."

She went to work next morning. There was nobody to tell her much, and the other girls were not inclined to be very helpful. They cast curious glances at her plain attire and made remarks on style that she could not help knowing were meant for her ears. But happiness is a relative thing. Margaret was so relieved to be in a position of independence that she cared little for what they said or looked. Still it is not in human nature to ignore such thrusts entirely—certainly not at twenty.

It was a third or fourth rate store that Margaret was in and she was thrown among a rather common class of clerks. "Sales-ladies," they called themselves.

Among them was one that seemed different. She and Louise Elkins took to each other from the first, and a few days made them good friends. To her Margaret confided her want of a boarding place. Did she know of any place—not too expensive? Yes, she knew of just such a place. It was a little back room and rather dingy, but it was in a respectable house and cheap.

The next day saw Margaret installed in it. When she took her trunk away, Mrs. Montessoro asked her politely to come and see them any day in the week except Sunday—of course she never invited company for Sunday—and Margaret thanked her, remembering that that was the only day on which she could by any possibility go.

Her work at the store was not hard, but it compelled her

to stand from morning till night. She asked Louise Elkins one day why they could not sit down.

"It's against the rules, that's all I know."

"Well, it's a very cruel and senseless rule," said Margaret hotly.

"I did hear that some of the women's clubs were trying to get the rule changed, but they haven't done it yet. It makes it awful hard. It's a dog's life anyway!" Louise said bitterly. They were sitting in Margaret's room. There was but one chair and the hostess had taken to the bed.

"I tell you, girls don't know when they are well off in this world," she continued, gloomily. "They think if they can only get to the city they will pretty nearly be in heaven, and then when they get here they find it more like—the other place!"

Margaret looked at her with a shocked face.

"I know that sounds wicked, but I don't care! I get so tired of it sometimes that I want to lie down and die! You have to be there so early—and then you are on your feet till you are ready to drop—and when you get home there's no home about it! It's just a cheap boarding-house. There's nobody that cares!"

"Why did you leave home?" asked Margaret.

"Oh,—I had a stepmother and we didn't get along very well. If my own mother had been living you better believe I never would have left her! You don't have but one mother! Is your's living?"

"Yes," Margaret said, contritely.

"Didn't she hate to see you go off to the city?"

"Yes." The tears were trickling slowly down now.

"Well—if there was anybody in the world that wanted me—really, truly, wanted me—I don't think there's anything that would keep me from them."

"But suppose there were hard things in your life at home?" said Margaret, her lips quivering like a grieved child's.

"Oh, there are hard things about everything in this world. There's always something that you would like to have different. I think sometimes that maybe I was as much to blame as my stepmother was—that is, of late years—I didn't use to think so. Somehow you see things differently when you are away from them—especially if you are looking back at something you can't mend and you think maybe, just maybe, it was your fault, too. Oh well! You see," she broke off abruptly to say, "the trouble in a city is that you don't seem to count. In the country or a small place everybody knows you and you are somebody; but in a place like this you are just like a drop of water in Lake Michigan! It's awful how lonesome you feel when you get to thinking about it!"

"Why don't you go back if you feel that way?"

"I don't know that I want to go back. I've been away so long that I feel that I have lost my place there. You know when you

step out of the procession it closes right up. It doesn't take long to lose your place in the world, I can tell you!"

This talk disturbed Margaret. She thought of it many times. Their cases were not so very unlike. Would she feel as Louise did when she had tried it as long?

She had been in the store about a month when she noticed a tall slender girl talking with the manager. She looked as if she had been sick. The manager called Margaret to the desk that night and paid her off. The other girl was coming back in the morning. He would not need her any more. It came like a thunder clap out of a clear sky.

She had written to her home a few days before telling of her work, of Louise, of the magnificent sights in the windows on State Street—of everything but the hardships she had encountered. And her good mother thought with a sigh and a tiny tear, "She is happier there than she would be with us."

After losing her place, Margaret rented a cheaper room and boarded herself. Everybody knows that that means insufficient food. No woman will do cooking enough for herself alone to do much more than support life, even when she has a good stove and plenty in the larder. Margaret had neither. She grew gaunt and haggard. And still her tramp kept on.

She could have gotten sewing to do if she had had a machine. Fortunately, she did not have, else she might have drifted into the slavery of the sweatshops. She did a far better thing.

It came about in this way. She had got down to her last dollar—and coal to buy. For days she had been living on tea and crackers. It weakened her body, and she felt dimly at times that it was almost weakening her mind. She could not control her thoughts. They were continually dwelling upon the abundance of her father's house. She kept thinking of the good things she and her mother used to make. She would make some of them now, only—they all took cream and butter and eggs. And cream and butter and eggs were so high in the city. Why, she even had to buy buttermilk! Think of it! Buying buttermilk!

She would stand sometimes and look at the things in the restaurant windows, and catch delicious whiffs from within. How warm it looked and how good it smelled. Then she would go back to her tea and crackers and go to bed early. That was cheaper than coal. What roaring fires they used to have at home!

One day she passed by an intelligence office. There was a sign, "Girls Wanted." She went inside.

"It is for domestics," the woman told her, "at good wages." Margaret walked out. But she found herself going around by the place every day after that. There was a sort of fascination about it.

On the day that she got down to her last dollar—and coal to

buy—she strolled around by the office again, telling herself that she would just walk by. She was very hungry.

As she passed the door a lady came out.

"Send me somebody as soon as you can," she was saying. "No, I shouldn't mind having a girl from the country. Sometimes they are the best kind. You know I pay good wages."

She was stepping into her carriage when Margaret spoke.

"Lady, are you looking for a girl? I—I would like a place."

"Have you your references? Where did you work last?"

"I have never worked out before." Margaret's heart sank. She supposed that would end as everything else had. She did not know that in this field even unskilled labor commands good wages. "I haven't been in the city long. I heard you say you wouldn't mind having a girl from the country."

The lady hesitated. It was risky of course. But her need was urgent and Margaret's was a good face.

"You may come tomorrow," she said, giving her an address, "I will try you."

The deed was done!

CHAPTER VI.

The Reign of the Autocrat.

If Margaret had wanted to demonstrate the size of the place she occupied in the Sloan household she could have done it in no swifter, surer way than by leaving it vacant. We think little of the blessedness of common things until we wake some day to find them gone. The light of heaven is held a paltry gift while it is undimmed; the very breath of life is only valued when it grows labored.

As Mrs. Sloan's back had become weakened year by year Margaret had assumed more and more of the care and responsibility of the household. Nobody realized how much of the burden she was carrying. But when her end was dropped, the other end fell with crushing force on the weak shoulders of the over-taxed mother.

Country life is hard on women. Men can usually hire hands for themselves, but female help is hard to get and harder to keep. Mrs. Sloan had never hired, but at fifty she was worn out. And like many another household martyr she had given herself so uncomplainingly that nobody perceived her failing strength till it was gone. They accepted her ministrations as they accepted the dawning of the day—without thought or without thanks—to her or to Heaven.

And yet—how blessed a thing is the promise that "day and night shall not cease!"

The dawn failed one morning for the Sloan family. Mrs. Sloan was in bed and could not get up.

We can only hint at the throes of misdirected energy into which that household was thrown by the failure of one frail woman to be at her post. There was a tramp of heavy feet over the uncarpeted floor, and the bungling haste of impatient, unaccustomed hands. And there were voiceless imprecations over wet wood (Dick had failed—as he usually did—to bring in any wood the night before). The stove smoked (it was a poor flue and the dampers had to be managed by an expert to make it keep the peace); the oven wouldn't heat (Mr. Sloan had often told his wife that he knew there was no use of her poking around so early—he could heat the stove—she didn't manage it right!); there was an anxious consultation as to whether it was soda or baking powder that was used with sweet milk, and a disastrous decision in favor of the former; there were these and many other obstructions to that breakfast. When they sat down to the table, hours had been wasted, and gloom rested upon the family.

Stock in womanhood rose considerably higher within the next few days. Even as small a specimen as Mamie began to have an appreciable value. Meals had come and gone with such unvarying regularity in that house that they had never realized before that it took the labor of head and hand.

Cy, who seemed rather more efficient than Dick, was detailed as chief cook, with Mamie as assistant. This arrangement was nominal, made in deference to his years and masculinity. In reality Mamie was the "boss," and Cy waited on her.

Cy's work was thus thrown upon Dick and his father, who began to realize with wonderment the amount of time consumed in cooking and cleaning up. Cy in his blundering way hardly finished one meal before it was time to get another, a thing which amazed and depressed him greatly. Many women have the same depression, though they have long since got over the amazement. Mr. Sloan tried it himself one day, having sent Cy to town. He felt sure, privately, that Cy must dawdle over the work. He never accused him of it again, even in thought.

Things went on this way for a week. Then Mr. Sloan sent for the doctor. Something had to be done.

The doctor looked grave and questioned Mrs. Sloan closely.

"When do you think she will be up?" asked Mr. Sloan. He was a kind enough husband in his way—which was not the very best—but the pressing need was that she should be up.

"She's not going to be up right away," answered the doctor drily. "She's liable to take a long rest, and she needs it. Some women would keep on till they dropped in their tracks if the Almighty didn't tell 'em when to stop! Where's Margaret?"

"She's gone to the city," said Mr. Sloan. He was a good deal startled at the doctor's manner.

"Better have her shorten her visit. There needs to be a good strong willing pair of shoulders around here for a while." Mrs. Sloan's pale face brightened. She looked pleadingly up at her husband.

That gentlemen followed the doctor out to the gate.

"You don't think it is anything serious?" he asked anxiously.

"She's worn out," said the doctor curtly.

The next day Mr. Sloan stopped his work and started on the hunt of a girl. He had understood that mute appeal of his wife's eyes, but he could not make up his mind to send for Margaret.

He scoured the country. "Girls" in that section were as scarce as hen's teeth, and a stress of sickness or work always increased the scarcity. On the fourth day he was successful. Miss Elviry Simmons would be there the next day. Cy shut the oven door with a thankful heart. This was the last supper he'd get, thank goodness! Even Mamie hung up her dish towel with a sigh of relief.

Miss Elviry Simmons was a middle-aged maiden whose muscles and opinions had toughened with passing years. There were certain conditions which must be met before she would go anywhere. What were they? Well, she must eat with the family. Granted—instantly. She must be introduced to all guests. Certainly. She must be called Miss by the family. Without question. Mr. Sloan would have bound his family to have called her "Lady Simmons" if she had desired it.

Very well, she said graciously, she would go. And Farmer Sloan went home feeling that all would now be well. Deluded man!

The fray began with a three-weeks wash on the kitchen floor and the men ready to start to their work.

"Where's the other tub?" asked Miss Elviry.

"There ain't any other," said Mamie. "We just have two."

It did seem very much as if Mr. Sloan quickened his steps. It was no use.

"Mr. Sloan!" Miss Elviry's sharp voice brought him up standing. "Hain't there another tub?"

"There's two," he growled. Nobody need growl at Miss Simmons. She placed her arms akimbo, a woman's attitude of defiance.

"And you expect me to do a three-weeks washin' with two tubs! Why, there has to be three tubs—one for the suds—one for the renchin'—and one for bluin'! You don't tell me Mrs. Sloan's ben gettin' along all these years with only two tubs!"

"Yes," he said shortly. He was not used to being brow-beaten by a woman.

"Well for the lands sake! The poor thing! Broke her back

to save a tub! Couldn't you make her let you get one? or a washin' machine? or a wringer? or something to help her out?"

He did not answer. He was thinking of what a jeweler told him once about the folly of risking a mainspring to save buying a ten-cent watch key. Miss Elviry had turned her back to hunt for something else and he took the opportunity to do likewise.

"Where's the wash bench?"

"We haven't got any," said Mamie. "Ma uses the wood box." Miss Elviry sniffed.

"Is this all the wash-board you've got?" She held it off and looked it over contemptuously. "That'll tear the clothes all to pieces!"

"Ma kinder rubs down at the side," explained the child.

"Well, I don't take the tag ends of nothin'," said Miss Simmons, grimly.

When Mr. Sloan and the boys came in at noon the washing was on the back porch neatly tied up in a red tablecloth.

"Can one of the boys take that washin' down to old Mis Sampson's? She says she can do it. I went down to see."

"It was in the bargain for you to do the washing," began Mr. Sloan.

"It's never in nobody's bargain to work without tools," remarked Miss Elviry, with emphasis. "I'm ready to wash when there's things to wash with."

Mr. Sloan was thoroughly roused. He looked her square in the face.

"I am not going—"

"Pa," called a weak voice. He went to his wife's bedside, prudently closing the door.

"Better give it to her," she whispered. "The washing's got to be done!" And Mr. Sloan faced the situation.

"I was just going to say," he remarked, when he went back, "that I am not going to town today and maybe it would be just as well to take it to Mrs. Sampson this time. I'll get what's needed before next washday."

It was a bloodless conflict but victory perched on Miss Elviry's banners.

The next round was over the ironing.

"Put on all the irons, Mamie, and get out the dress board. I'll go at them dresses of your ma's the first thing."

She was sprinkling the clothes.

"We haven't got but two irons, and ma does the dresses on the table."

Miss Elviry stepped promptly to the door. Mr. Sloan was just starting to town.

"Mr. Sloan! I wish you'd get a couple of irons and a skirt

board in town. I'll let the ironing go till you get back. I can't iron with two irons!"

"My wife does," said Mr. Sloan sharply. He was getting tired of this woman's demands.

"Well, I am not your wife," said Miss Elviry, pointedly. "That makes a whole lot of difference!"

Mr. Sloan pondered over this remark most of the way to town. But he brought back the things.

Mr. Sloan learned a good many things from his hired girl in the next few weeks—things that were not included in the bargain and were too valuable ever to be paid for. He learned the paucity of his own providing, for one thing—learned it afresh every time he started to town, for it was an early and unannounced start that got ahead of Miss Elviry. It was dishes or pans or mops or something all the time. "These are worn out," she would say, and that was the end of it.

When he would remonstrate she had one unfailing reply, "No woman can work without tools." Mr. Sloan began by slow stages to get it through his brain that this was just what he had been expecting women to do all his life.

He made a few weak efforts to release himself from the thralldom of her constant demands but on such occasions she immediately applied the thumb-screws in the shape of a hint that she was ready to quit at any time, and he was instantly quiescent. Like every other man with a sick wife, he was in bondage to his hired girl.

He began, too, thanks to his exacting teacher, to see that Margaret had not been unreasonable in her requests—how very modest they seemed now!—and with this conviction, reluctantly but unavoidably reached, he felt a dull ache whenever he thought of the girl. It was he that had been unreasonable—yes, even unjust! He came to this conclusion slowly, after many of Miss Elviry's lessons.

And then he had a haunting feeling that it was a poor bargain he was making. He felt so every time he paid her. This money—and it seemed a great deal to him—was all going to a stranger. If he had allowed Margaret something for her work—he realized now how fairly she had earned it—why, he would be out no more than he was now, and then it would all be kept in the family. Mr. Sloan was a thrifty man. He could not help seeing that advantage. If he had not spoken hastily. He thought a little just here of writing for her to come back, but she was so pleased in the city, and then—what would he say to her? No—it was done now, he thought gloomily—it couldn't be taken back.

Mrs. Sloan had been sick for months, first up and then down, when the dread announcement came. Miss Elviry was going to

leave. She was worn out working where there was so much sickness. She had a good chance and she was going to take it.

When she went out there was a dismayed silence. Mrs. Sloan sat bolstered up in an arm-chair, her face as white as the pillows. She looked at her husband wistfully. Then she spoke from the depths of a yearning heart:

"Oh, pa—we need our girl!"

He did not answer her. He was thinking, "I wish to Heaven she was here!"

That night he wrote a letter when the rest were asleep—wrote it laboriously, read it, and then put it in the fire. When Miss Elviry had been gone a week he wrote another.

CHAPTER VII.

The Shadow of a Cloud.

It was with mingled feelings of relief and mortification that Margaret found herself installed as second girl in Mrs. Delraven's beautiful home—relief that the pressing, driving fear of being turned out on the street was now removed—that she was in a safe, respectable shelter, with no fear of starvation before her; of mortification, deep and sore, that this could only be secured by becoming somebody's hired girl.

The anticipations with which she had come to the city, her high hopes of speedy employment at a lucrative salary, her dreams of social life and pleasure—innocent in themselves, and natural as breath to the young—how far away they all seemed! She felt a sudden pity for herself as she remembered what she thought it would be—and what it had been. If she had not eaten of the tree of life she certainly had of the tree of knowledge.

"Mrs. Delraven's hired girl!" She said it over and over to get accustomed to the sound. What would Polk Summit think of that? What would her father think? What did she herself think? She who had left her own independent life at home where were all the people in the world that cared for her, and come here—for what? To be Mrs. Delraven's hired girl!

But—she asked herself as if the thing she had done needed extenuation—what could she do? She was suffering for bread! Bread! Think of it! She who had been used to the homely abundance of a farmer's table. And "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

She determined that they should not know about it at home. She wrote to them that she had moved to Ashland Boulevard, saying nothing about her losing her place at the store, and leaving them to infer that she had simply changed her boarding place. She smiled mirthlessly to herself to think of her boarding on

Ashland. But to them Ashland Boulevard and Halstead Street or even So. Clark would be all the same.

In reality the work was not hard at Mrs. Delraven's. It was a convenient, well-ordered home, and Margaret as second girl had little of the drudgery to do. It was just the idea of being a hired girl—that and the awful isolation of it. She could not make a companion of the fat Irish cook, any more than Mrs. Delraven could with propriety make a companion of her. She saw at once that it was impossible in the very nature of things that this should ever be, and her good sense accepted it as final and right. There was no feeling of wounded pride at not being made one of the family,—she felt a half-pitying scorn of anybody that would expect such a thing; but—it was so horribly lonesome.

Of course there were her evenings, but she would not go on the streets after dark, and her Thursday afternoon out, but she had nowhere to go and nobody to visit. On this day she usually wandered up and down State street, looking in at the windows and laying up material for her next letter.

She did not hear from home often—the Sloans were poor writers—and every letter she did receive left her feeling a little more dreary than it found her. They seemed to be getting along, as her father had predicted, “full as well without her as she would without them.” In reality, they were far from being in the flourishing condition that Margaret supposed from the letters, which were short and impersonal, telling about the weather and the neighborhood. “She’s having such a good time we won’t spoil her enjoyment by letting her know how much we need her,” the unselfish mother would think, and so Margaret, at her end of the line, would devour the letter in the vain hope of seeing some sign of being missed. Then she would think of what the girl in the store said, “It doesn’t take long to lose your place in this world.”

She had fleeting thoughts of going some Thursday to see Ethel. She met Mrs. Montessor on the street one day and told her with hot cheeks where she was and what she was doing. She never again entertained the thought of visiting them. She found that there was now a great gulf fixed between her and her one-time friend. Social distinctions are very marked in the city.

One source of discontent with Margaret, as with many another neat, self-respecting girl in domestic service, was that she had to occupy the room with another servant. The cook was untidy and snored, but she was Margaret’s bedfellow. The girl would lie on the rail and listen to her stertorous breathing for hours together. If only Mamie were in her arms again!

Margaret was beginning to become accustomed to her work and to the ways of the family, who were all kind to her in an impersonal way but kept her at arm’s length, when suddenly a thunderbolt struck her.

Mrs. Delraven's daughter one day had a small select luncheon. There were only half a dozen guests, all intimate acquaintances but one, a Miss Ventrome, a friend of Miss Delraven's friend, visiting Chicago from a distant city. She was a wealthy girl who dressed faultlessly and had no end of money to spend. The luncheon was in her honor.

The girls were taken into Miss Delraven's room to remove their wraps. They were about ready to descend when Miss Ventrome said, "Wait a minute, girls, I want some powder. I wonder where the chamois is?"

"Look in the drawer," said Effie Stone.

Miss Ventrome opened the drawer. There in the midst of multitudinous feminine belongings lay the chamois, and beside it, in full view, was a ten-dollar gold piece. The other girls were at the door. Her fingers closed instantly on both. The next moment she was using the chamois, girl fashion, two fingers holding tightly the gold coin.

"Now let me fix a hook and I'll be ready," she said gayly. The coin was slipped dexterously inside her trim waist, a hook adjusted, and she turned from the mirror. She had taken the money in plain sight of three girls who were looking at her all the time and not one saw a thing unusual. She had the quick motions and secretiveness of the kleptomaniac.

She had no use for the money, no intention of wrong-doing when she opened the drawer, but with the opportunity came the irresistible impulse.

There is no doubt that a genuine kleptomania exists. It seems pronounced in circles of the wealthy whose circumstances preclude the suspicion of ordinary theft. But the thought arises—may not the lowly ones, those whose circumstances do not thus at once clear them by forbidding the thought of a motive—may not they too be sufferers from this same disease? They are seldom given the benefit of the doubt.

The next morning after luncheon Margaret was summoned into the presence of Mrs. Delraven and her daughter and asked to shut the door. They looked very grave.

"Margaret," said the elder lady, "when you cleaned up in Miss Irene's room yesterday did you see anything of her pocket-book?"

She looked searchingly at her. The hot tide rolled into the girl's face and then receded, leaving it white with terror. She realized instantly the position she would be in if the money was gone.

"No, ma'am," she answered, "but I saw a ten-dollar gold piece on the floor and put it in her drawer—right in front. I supposed she had dropped it out of her purse."

The two ladies exchanged glances.

"And why didn't you tell her about it?"

"I was going to," she said, miserably—if she only had!—everything was against her—"but I was busy, and then the ladies came, and—"

"Well, why didn't you tell her after they were gone?"

"There wasn't any reason," faltered Margaret, "only I just forgot it—there was so much to do, and everything."

Mrs. Delraven looked grave. She was a strictly just woman, but to her Margaret's embarrassment seemed proof of her being guilty. She did not know that innocence can outblush guilt every time.

"Margaret," she said kindly but firmly, "if you have taken this money—I don't say you have, but circumstances are certainly against you—but if you have, and will acknowledge it, and give me back the ten dollars I will do nothing more about it, but if you persist in your denial I shall have to telephone for an officer."

"Oh, Mrs. Delraven," cried the girl in an agony of terror and humiliation, "indeed, indeed, I don't know anything about it except what I have told you. I can't acknowledge it for I did not take it. I can't give it back for I have never had it, except to drop it in the drawer. You may look through all my things and search me thoroughly—but please, oh, please don't have me arrested. It would kill me to have to go to jail!"

She wrung her hands and wept. "Maybe you'll find the money. Maybe—"

"That will do," said Mrs. Delraven, coldly. "I will look through your things."

Of course the money was not found, though everything was emptied and shaken.

"Did you go out last night?" asked Mrs. Delraven, with another searching glance.

"Yes, ma'am, I went over to Madison street, but just for a few minutes—"

"Oh, well!" Mrs. Delraven laid down the garment she had in her hand. "Of course it is no use to look through your trunk now."

And Margaret perceived that even this was additional proof of her guilt.

"I will give you till this afternoon to decide what you will do. You may go to your work now."

She spent a wretched day of suspense. Toward night she was again called before Mrs. Delraven. Had she made up her mind? Would she acknowledge it now? Alas! she could only reiterate her innocence.

Then her employer said, with absolute certainty that she was just, "I have decided not to prosecute you, Margaret. This may be your first offense, and I sincerely hope it will be your last. Let

it be a warning to you in the future, and never, never permit yourself again to be overcome by a temptation of this kind."

And what could Margaret, who was as honest as Mrs. Delraven herself, say in self-justification? Suspicion always falls first on the servant girl—never on the well-dressed guest.

"But while I shall take no steps against you," Mrs. Delraven continued, "of course I cannot keep in my employ a girl I cannot trust. Here are your wages. You may go at once." Then she added, seeing the girl's blanched face and remembering that she was from the country, "You can stay here tonight if you wish."

And Margaret thanked her humbly. She had wondered where she would go.

She went back to her old boarding place, knowing no other. Mrs. Muldoon had someone in the room she had occupied, but she could give her a smaller one in the attic without a fire. Margaret took it gladly. It was a little cheaper.

When she went back to Ashland Boulevard to get her things after making her arrangements with Mrs. Muldoon, she found a letter there for her. She thrust it into her bosom and there it warmed a dying hope to life. What if it should say "Come home?"

She did not read it until she was in her cheerless attic room. It was from Mamie and ran thus:

Dear Mag: I take my pen in hand to tell you that we are getting along just awful and hope these few lines will find you enjoying the same blessing ("they certainly do," thought Margaret with a brief gleam of wintry humor. It had not sounded exactly right to Mamie herself but still she felt it was the orthodox form). Ma's sick all the time now but she sits up while pa makes her bed and the old white cat has got kittens and I am saving one of them for you because Jeff told me you couldn't take the one I gave you that day. He said he had it. Ma said the other day we needed our girl—that was just what she said—but pa he turned away and didn't say nothing but I wisht you'd come home and so does Cy. I asked Jeff if he didn't too, but he didn't look like he did. I spose he's afraid you'd take that kitten back. And Miss Elviry's fearful cross and pa thinks she wastes like everything but she's gone now so no more at present.

From your obedient servant,

Mamie.

Margaret shed bitter tears over this innocent epistle. There was so much more in it than Mamie knew! It made her very uneasy about her mother. She knew she was needed—and her mother wanted her—but if her father had turned away and said nothing—

She went again that day to the intelligence office. Had she worked in the city? Yes. Did she have her recommendations?

Margaret stammered an explanation. The woman shrugged her shoulders and turned away. She could do nothing for her without recommendations.

Margaret drifted for a time, then struggled, and finally almost went under.

In the security of the Ashland Boulevard place she had thought it safe to buy her jacket, and it cost more than three dollars. Then there were other things she needed and purchased, expecting to keep her place indefinitely. If she only had that money now for food.

She was in a poor part of the city. On all sides were poverty and suffering. The sights and sounds shocked her continually. She grew heartsick and dizzy thinking of the hopelessness of the surging human mass around her. Once when she was almost desperate, a woman, clad in rags and wolfish hunger, stopped her to ask if she could give her any work. She give anybody work! The woman had judged her by her clothing, which was so much better than her own. That was a hard winter in Chicago.

One day she was passing along the street and saw a woman in an alley—better dressed than she was—stand beside a barrel of garbage in which scraps of food and ashes were jumbled together. The poor creature shot a swift glance around to see if anybody was looking, and then snatched a crust from the pile and ate it ravenously.

Margaret grew faint at the sight. A crust of bread! How soon would she come to that? She was hungry now! And this woman was well dressed! A crust of bread! Then she found coming into her mind fragments of something she had learned at Sunday school long—oh, so long ago!—"In my father's house—bread and to spare—and I perish with hunger." She did not think what they were from—she had no thought of the prodigal—she only thought as she turned and fled from the place, "I can't stand it! I can't stand it! I've got to go home!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A Wise Father and a Glad Child.

It was Saturday afternoon on the Sloan farm. Mr. Sloan was shaving preparatory to going to town. He had been in a state of suppressed excitement all day, taking out his watch every now and then to see the hour. By the time he had finished shaving he was hurrying so as to be almost dangerous to himself.

"Goodbye, ma," he said, with unwonted tenderness as he started. "I'm going to bring you something nice from town."

Mrs. Sloan smiled back faintly from her pillows. She did not care much for what was in town these days.

Mr. Sloan went into the kitchen where Mamie and Cy were doing up the dinner dishes. He took a sharp look around.

"Seems to me, Cy, that stove looks pretty bad for a new one. Can't you shine it up a little with some of that stuff ma uses? And I'd mop up this floor if I was you." He looked ruefully at the grease dropped around the stove by awkward hands.

Cy stared at him in amazement. When did his father ever care before for the appearance of the kitchen?

"Goodbye, little girl." Farmer Sloan seemed to be in a particularly good humor with himself and everybody else today. "What do you want me to bring you from town?"

"Candy," said Mamie promptly.

"Oh, pshaw! I'll bring you something better than candy. Something you'd rather have than anything."

"I know," said Cy to the child. "It's a doll."

But Mamie was looking into her father's face.

"I believe I know," she cried rapturously.

"Well, come here and whisper it to me."

He bent his ear. He was seldom playful with anybody but Mamie. She whispered one word. He laughed and pinched her cheek.

"It is! I know it is!" she cried. "Oh, pa!"

"Don't tell anybody," he called back. "I haven't said yet it's so."

Mamie held her own counsel, but she flew around the kitchen like the embryo woman that she was, straightening, cleaning, and putting neglected things to rights.

"What's the matter with this family?" growled Cy from his knees on the floor where he was wrestling in a hand-to-hand conflict with spots. "Everybody seems to have an extra neat streak."

"I'm just doing my Saturday's cleaning," said Mamie with delight. "If anybody should come in I guess we wouldn't want them to think we didn't never clean!"

Jeff Heminway came over that afternoon to bring Mrs. Sloan two apple pies his mother had sent her for Sunday dinner.

"She said she knew that you didn't have anybody to make them," he explained, "and men-folks had to have pies. I'll just set them in the kitchen, Mrs. Sloan. Don't you get up. Hello, Mamie!"

He stood and talked to the child for a few minutes. As he started into the other room Mamie closed the door and came close to him. Cy had just gone out.

"I've got something to tell you," she whispered mysteriously. "You come down to the pig-pen after a little."

Mrs. Sloan was always glad to see Jeff. He seemed to bring her closer to Margaret, though he talked but little about her himself. She was not conscious that he adroitly turned the conversation in that direction and let her do the talking. It was an engrossing theme to her, and he was a good listener.

After a while Jeff got up and took his hat.

"I guess I'll go out and see Dick's pigs," he said, lounging toward the door.

Mamie was there before him.

"Say," she began with the air of one knowing a secret, "do you know what I believe?"

"No. What?"

"I believe pa's gone to the depot for Mag."

"Mag!"

"Yes, sir, Mag. Won't that be fun?" She capered about in high glee.

"Does your ma know it?" asked Jeff incredulously.

"No, sir! Not a soul knows it but me and I just guessed at it."

Jeff turned away disappointed. "Pshaw! She won't leave the city to come back here! She was too anxious to get away."

"Well, I guess she wasn't so anxious to get away!" said Mamie indignantly. She did not like Jeff's contemptuous way of setting aside her great piece of news. He didn't know as much as he thought he did! "She didn't want to go a bit! I heard her and ma talking and crying about it that night. They thought I was asleep, but I wasn't. Mag hated just awful to go and leave ma."

"Well, what did she do it for then?" asked Jeff. He was rather bewildered at this new version of the story, but determined to get at the bottom of it if it could be done by pumping Mamie. "Cy said she went because she was tired of the country and wanted to learn city ways."

"Cy's an old story-teller!" cried Mamie indignantly. "That wasn't it at all. She went 'cause—" She stopped, feeling that she was telling too much.

"Well?"

"'Cause pa and her had a fuss," she blurted out.

"A fuss! What about?"

And Mamie, seeing that she had got into a quagmire of questions, concluded that the easiest way out would be by the highway of truth. So the story that Cy and Margaret had guarded so jealously to preserve the honor of the family, fell at last upon Jeff's eager ears. It explained to him all that was inexplicable—all that had seemed heartless and selfish in Margaret.

At its close he caught up the astonished Mamie in his strong arms and tossed her into the air.

"Mamie!" he cried, "you're a trump!"

Mamie did not know what a trump was, and she did not much like Jeff Heminway's taking such liberties with her anyway, just as if she were a baby, but she could see that her story had produced no bad effects, and being somewhat fearful of the propriety of telling it now that it was told, she prudently decided to keep on the good side of Jeff.

"You won't never, never tell anybody, will you?" she asked anxiously.

"Never!"

"Cross your heart?"

"Cross my heart! Wish I may die!" said Jeff solemnly.

A little later he told Mrs. Sloan that he wanted to see Mr. Sloan on a matter of business and he guessed he'd wait till he came. He did not specify the business.

When Mr. Sloan reached Polk Summit he did not go to the store to get the nice things he had promised to bring his wife and daughter. He went straight to the station. He fastened his horses at a safe distance and entered the waiting-room.

"Lookin' for anybody today?" asked the agent with friendly interest.

"Yes, my daughter," he answered. "She been to Chicago for a spell and she's coming on this train." He spoke confidently. He could not by any possibility know that the letter telling Margaret he needed her and wanted her to come home had reached Ashland Boulevard after she left and had been returned to the postman with the statement, "Address unknown."

And yet when the train pulled into Polk Summit there was Margaret, a little anxious about the meeting, but happy as a bird. How good all the old familiar land-marks seemed! She had not had time to hear since sending her letter telling that she would be here on the excursion, but she knew that somebody would be there to meet her. She rather hoped it would be her father. There were things she wanted to say, hard as they were, and she would be glad of this opportunity to have them over with.

She met him bravely. The war was over, and with her it was unconditional surrender. He kissed her as if nothing unpleasant had ever passed between them. He had had to ask her to come

back and he wouldn't be mean enough to seem grumpy now that she had come!

He put her valise and the little trunk in the back of the spring wagon and helped her in. Then he turned around by the postoffice.

"You get out and get the mail, daughter," he said. "I'm most afraid to leave the team."

She went in with springing step, exchanging greetings with the old postmaster who had been there ever since she could remember. How nice it was to be where people knew you and spoke to you by name, she was thinking, as she glanced at the mail he was handing her. Why! She gave a start. There was her own letter to her father! He had not been to the office for several days. She thrust it inside her coat instinctively. She was in a state of bewilderment. If he hadn't got her letter—and clearly he hadn't—how did he happen to be there to meet her?

She was pondering this question in a confused way, and Mr. Sloan was tucking the papers down between them when the postmaster came hurrying out with another letter.

"Hold on!" he said, looking at it critically, "I don't know but this belongs to you, but it is so marked up I can't hardly make it out. There's Miss Something or other scratched out—but here's your name, certain—and what's that? Address unknown?"

"That's mine," said Mr. Sloan hastily reaching for it with a quick glance at Margaret. She was arranging the robe and did not notice.

"Well, what's that Miss—" began the old man. Like many rural servants of Uncle Sam he wanted to get out of his office all it was worth as a medium of information.

"That's all right," said Mr. Sloan hastily. "Good day. My horses won't stand," he called back.

"Humph! Seems to me they stand better than you do!" muttered the postmaster. He did not like to have his curiosity baffled.

Mr. Sloan slipped the letter into his pocket. His astonishment was not easily disposed of. How in the world did Margaret happen to be on that train?

They talked of the city and the farm, of the weather and the family. Finally he remarked as a sort of a feeler, "It was a good thing I went to the depot today."

"Yes," said Margaret demurely, "and wasn't it fortunate that I came on this train?"

Then they lapsed into wondering silence. Not much gained by this venture!

They rode on in silence for a time. They both had something to say and hardly knew how to say it.

"We've got a new cook stove," he said, at last.

"You have? I guess ma likes that."

"Yes, or she will when she can use it. She's poorly, ma is."

Then he went on, "You'll find things a good deal handier round the kitchen than they were." He did not say, as he might have done, "Thanks to Miss Elviry." Margaret hardly knew what to reply. This was dangerous ground.

"Fact is," he went on resolutely, "I guess I was little bit slow to see what you women folks needed around the house. I guess maybe I was."

It was a great deal for him to say. Margaret was humbled instantly. It broke down the last vestige of her pride. She hadn't much left anyway. The city had done that much for her.

"If you would be willing to come back now," he began—

"Oh, pa!" she cried, "I'm glad to come back! I've been so homesick! I missed you all so!"

Strange how easy it is for two to give up if one but makes a beginning.

"There! There!" said Mr. Sloan soothingly as if it were Mamie, and feeling for his handkerchief, "I guess you got along full as well without us as we did without you."

"Pa!" Margaret said after a pause. After this generous acknowledgment the hidden letter burned in her bosom.

"What, daughter?"

"I wrote and asked you to send for me. The letter was in the office." She took it out and gave it to him, taking the lines that he might read.

He read it through twice. It was very short, saying only that she was tired of the city and wanted to come home—would he forgive what she had said and meet her at the train? He waited so long before speaking that she looked around at him fearfully. His seamed, sun-browned face was working under some strong emotion.

"And you wanted to come back?" he said. "You found you needed us, after all. Well"—he put his hand in his overcoat pocket and drew out his own letter—"I guess there's two of us!"

It asked her to come home; they found they could not get along without her. Margaret's eyes were brimming when she finished it. They needed her! They wanted her! She was alone in the world no longer.

They did not say much about it. It is not the way of fathers and daughters to lay bare their inner souls to each other. The letters told the story. They were content to know there was peace between them.

When they were in sight of the big gate, Mr. Sloan cleared his throat again.

"There's one thing I want to speak about, daughter. I've thought about it a good deal lately. I don't know but I ought to allow you something for your work the same as I do the boys. You certainly earn it," he said emphatically, with a poignant recol-

lection of days he had tried to take her place. He went on hurriedly as Margaret started to protest, "I wouldn't want to pay you wages, and you wouldn't want me to, but this will be just a kind of evening up, and it will make me feel more independent. I made up my mind to it," he said thoughtfully, "while Miss Elviry was with us. There, there! that's all right!"

"I knew it," cried Mamie, climbing into the buggy and devouring Margaret with kisses. The big gate was opened by a stalwart shoulder and Margaret was looking into Jeff Heminway's honest eyes. There was no cloud in them now, she saw with a thrill of happiness even in that brief moment. Whatever it was that had come between them was gone. She was sure of that.

A moment later she was in her mother's arms, laughing and crying together, while Mamie capered about and Mr. Sloan blew his nose hard and often. In Jeff's heart as he looked at them were sounding the triumphant strains of the "Jubilate," with the faint echoes of wedding bells in the distance. This was the Margaret he had always known.

She looked eagerly around the room, taking in all its familiar features with the eyes that had been so hungry for them. It was the same homely, unadorned place it had ever been—the same bare walls and uncurtained windows. There was little about it that was outwardly attractive. But it was home! And to Margaret just now it was irradiated with the light of love and mutual understanding and peace.

Her mother saw the glance.

"I'm afraid it all looks poor and mean to you, child, after the fine things you have seen."

"Poor!" said Margaret with kindling eyes. "Mean! It is the loveliest place on earth!"

She drew her mother's wasted cheek close to her own, rosy with health, and patted it softly. Then she laughed hysterically through her happy tears.

"I find I'm like the old woman that was sent to the Old Ladies' Home," she said. "She was dreadfully homesick, and when they told her that she ought not to be, because she had so much nicer things now than she had ever had before, she said pitifully, 'It's not the things I want—it's the folks.'"

PENNSYLVANIA!

BY LYDIA M. D. O'NEIL.

I was born in Pennsylvania, and I state the fact with pride;
I am proud of all her mountains and her fertile valleys wide;
Proud of her majestic forests, of her placid rivers blue;
Proud of all her wealth of blossoms, of her sons and daughters true.

Happy is the man or woman who, like me, can proudly say,
"I was born in Pennsylvania, tho' I've wandered far away."

Oh, those Pennsylvania mountains, rugged, rocky, high and steep!

They are solemn in the twilight, when the somber shadows creep;

They are fairest in the morning, when the rosy sprite of dawn
Lays her finger on their summits, ere the shades of night are gone.

Oh, those mighty, purple ranges, looming high and stretching far,
Hiding-place of evening sunbeams, and of morning's latest star!

Oh, those Pennsylvania forests—slender maple, stately pine,
Mighty oak and beech and chestnut, 'round whose trunks the
wild vines twine!

And the scarlet-fruited cherry, and the locust, white with bloom,
And the willow, drooping sadly, o'er (perchance) a forest tomb.

Oh, those leafy, silent forests, with stray sunbeams sifting
through,

Where soaring wild birds send their songs far-echoing to you!

Oh, those Pennsylvania rivers, and the lesser mountain-streams
Dashing madly down the hillsides, bright with many hues and
gleams!

Dear old Lehigh, "peaceful water," fair as any meadow-rill,
Moaning, sighing, laughing, singing, in my dreams I hear you
still!

Quaint old Pennsylvania rivers—each still bears its Indian
name—

Famed in legend, and deserving, to the utmost, of their fame.

Oh, those Pennsylvania blossoms! Sweet arbutus, in the Spring—
Mountain laurel—rhododendron—these in turn their offerings
bring.

Daisies, white and blue and yellow, lilies red and lilies blue,
Honeysuckle, sweet of odor—gentian, with the sky's own hue.

And, in Autumn, glowing fields of gleaming golden-rod,
By the lavish hand of Nature strewn upon the woodland sod.

I was born in Pennsylvania—in the greatest, grandest state—
In the Keystone of the Union—best of all the forty-eight;
For the gift the King of England gave to good old Father Penn
Was the finest gift e'er given to the worthiest of men.

And proud and happy is the man or woman who can say,
"I was born in Pennsylvania, tho' I've wandered far away."

Margaret's Summer Boarders.

By Caroline Abbott Stanley.

CHAPTER I.

The Open Door.

"Oh, mother! I wish I could do it!"

Margaret Sloan looked up eagerly from the letter she held in her hand. She had just finished reading it aloud.

"Why, Margaret, child! How could we take city people to board? We haven't got any plush sofa and patent rockers! And they wouldn't feel satisfied, likely, without. City folks have to have a lot of extras. We've got good plain furniture, but when it comes to gimcracks—well, we haven't got them, that's all!"

"I don't believe they want any extras," said Margaret, referring to the letter. "She says 'The only things we would stipulate are a room on the ground floor (Mamma being an invalid, you know), and good beds. Mrs. Montessor has told us what a good cook your mother is, and we wouldn't want you to go to any trouble for us.' There, you see, they don't want us to do anything extra."

"Oh, they all say they don't. But they do, just the same, when the time comes. I think I could suit them on beds," she went on reflectively. "I wonder Mrs. Montessor didn't tell them about my beds. There ain't any nicer, lighter feather beds than mine anywhere, if I do say it as shouldn't. And one for each of you. Miss Elviry was trying to get me to sell her one all the time she was here."

"Oh, I don't think we could put them on feathers!" said Margaret hastily.

"Well, what would you put them on then?" asked her mother in astonishment. "Straw?"

"I'd think we'd have to buy two mattresses." Margaret said firmly. She had been running it over swiftly in her mind while her mother was speaking. Cotton mattresses don't cost so very much. And if Miss Elviry—

"Mother, would you just as soon I would sell my feather bed to Miss Elviry and put the money into a mattress and springs? I'd a great deal rather have them."

Eventually it was arranged this way. And Mrs. Sloan, while not protesting—she never held out long against her daughter's strong will—felt that the child had sold her birthright for a mess of pottage.

It was the summer after Margaret's unsuccessful career in the city. She had gone to work bravely, glad to be at home once more, and determined to give full equivalent for all she received. She bore no bitterness against her father—she did not hold herself guiltless in that misunderstanding—but a deep wound always leaves a scar. It is never the same smooth flesh as before. Margaret's very scrupulousness to do her part and her father's guarded observance of her wishes were proofs that neither had forgotten. Perhaps it was just as well neither should.

It seemed very blessed to be in the country instead of the city this budding spring weather; to feel the green grass under her feet and the throb of life all around; to watch the garden rows from day to day and note the growth of the beans; to try to number the hurrying, scurrying chickens as they flocked at her call; to go with Mamie and Cy to look at the new lambs and pigs—oh, there were a thousand things that Margaret would not have known as pleasures at all had it not been for a certain poignant recollection of the time she walked the stone pavements alone and looked up at dizzy walls. Ah!

"Sweet are the uses of adversity!"

Then there were the apple blossoms and the peach blows and the snow drifts on the pear trees. They certainly had never been so beautiful as they were this spring! And everything was growing so! as if they were all glad to be alive. She was glad herself—so glad! so glad! There was bubbling up within her the June-tide joy of existence.

"Now the heart is so full that a drop o'erfills it,
We are happy now because God wills it;
No matter how barren the past may have been,
'Tis enough for us now that the leaves are green."

And with June and its flowers and its freshness had come this letter from Lilian Barrows, the city girl whose unspoken sympathy Margaret had felt and never forgotten. Her mother had been ill, Lilian wrote, and the doctor had said she must go away—not to the seashore or lakeside—but to some quiet farmhouse where she could have complete rest. Mrs. Montessor had suggested the Sloan place and so she wrote to ask if they could take the two for six or eight weeks. They were willing to pay well, etc., etc., and would Margaret write at once and let them know?

This was the startling proposition that was before them. The letter had just come, brought out from the office by a neighbor. They had had no opportunity to talk it over with Mr. Sloan. It was just as well perhaps, for by the time he came to the house Margaret's plans were all laid and her mother was won over.

"If I could only make enough to fix the house up I would be perfectly satisfied—just the inside of it. You know it needs it

awfully, mother. I am ashamed for anybody to go into the front room—the walls look so! And the old carpet is so worn!”

“It was good in its day,” said Mrs. Sloan with unwonted spirit. “It’s a three-ply. I went to housekeeping with that carpet.”

“It’s a one-ply now. That is the mean thing about those old three-ply carpets. You feel that you have to hang onto them because the middle ply is still there. I like things that wear out.”

“Where would you put them?”

“In the front room. I would have it nicely fixed up as a bedroom—”

“That would cost money.”

“Not much. It would have to be papered. I could paint it myself with prepared paint.”

“What would you do for a parlor when—if anybody was to come?”

“Oh, it’s summer time, and there’s the porch—and the stile-blocks,” she added with a rosy forecasting of who would occupy it.

She overruled all objections. She wouldn’t mind the extra work—it had to be done anyway—and Mamie would help. They might as well get money for their labor as to have visitors all summer, with a swift darkening of the brows as she thought of the Montessors. If pa would have the front room papered—

They adjourned to the room in question at this juncture to look the ground over. It was discouraging enough with its bare whitewashed walls, buff paper shades balanced precariously on a cord tying them up to the required height, paint that was “deeply, darkly blue,” and the old red three-ply, faded and worn out of remembrance of its former glory. In one corner was an old double lounge with a worsted log-cabin quilt on it and a small pillow which had a spotless white case edged with home-knit lace. This was their guest room upon occasion as well as parlor, and the lounge then spread itself.

It was not the parlor of the well-to-do, up-to-date readers of *The Stockman and Farmer*, but its fac-simile is to be found in many a farmhouse in the middle West today. It had been furnished when its owners were young and poor. It satisfied all their requirements then. It had not occurred to the father (who alone could refurnish) that it might not satisfy his daughter twenty-five years later.

It was discouraging, certainly, but Margaret was not to be daunted. This opportunity had fallen into her hands—and the more she thought of it the more she longed to try it. She wanted to prove to them all that there was something she could do, and do successfully. She was eminently successful in enlisting her mother and Mamie. By the time Mr. Sloan and the boys came in from work the boarders were there, the house beautifully fixed up with the proceeds, and Mamie waiting on the table with a brand new

tray, so rapidly did plans mature in youthful brains! Then Margaret laid it before her father.

That winter of trial had not been without its benefits to the Sloan family. It had made Margaret less harsh in expression of her opinions and Farmer Sloan more tolerant.

To her surprise and encouragement he offered no active opposition, though she was not sure what his silence meant. He tilted his chair back from the table and listened phlegmatically to her eager arguments.

"I feel sure I could do it, father," she said earnestly. "And I'd put every cent of it in the house. We have everything on the place that we would need to eat—chickens and vegetables and eggs and cream and—"

"And I'd pick the berries," said Mamie, "and keep off the flies—"

"So it would be almost clear gain," added Margaret.

The farmer felt a secret pride in her business-like way of looking at it. She was a real Sloan, he was thinking, in the way parents have of felicitating themselves when they see their own image and superscription in their offspring.

"How much would it cost me?" he asked cautiously.

"It wouldn't cost you anything in the end. It would only be advancing the money. Of course the room would have to be fixed up before they came, but as they pay me I would pay you back. There couldn't be any risk."

"They might not like it," suggested Mrs. Sloan.

"But they would like it. I know they would. Why, they want to come."

They talked it over in all its bearings.

"What would we do about ice?" asked Dick at last.

Ice! Sure enough!

"I never thought of that once," she said blankly. "No! we couldn't do it. We simply could not undertake it without ice."

She was cruelly disappointed. And in truth, by this time the others felt a little so too. She had carried them with her by the sheer force of her enthusiasm, though Dick had said in the beginning, "Oh, father! now I suppose I will have to think of the tablecloth and put on my coat! Well, I'll not do it!"

She sat biting her lips in perplexity and trying not to cry. It was such a disappointment.

"We need the ice for ourselves," she said a little bitterly. "Mother ought to have it—she is in no condition to use warm cistern water." It seemed for a moment as if there were going to be another rebellion.

The cistern water caught through the winter had been ruined by the overturning of the milk in it. Then the cistern had to be emptied and the late rains turned into it. It was a part of the

Sloan management to postpone improvements of all kinds until some exigency arose which demanded the expenditure of as much money twice over as the original improvement would have cost. Mrs. Sloan had talked ice-house until her faith was dead. Then she hung the milk in the well without remonstrance.

"Oh, I can get along," she said now with quick apprehension and that fatal self-effacement that ruins cisterns occasionally and husbands often.

"I have been thinking about getting ice this season from Mr. Waldron," said Mr. Sloan, slowly. "He has been at me to do it—I know mother does need it—"

A faint flush crept into Mrs. Sloan's thin face. It is sweet to have one's comfort remembered.

"If it wasn't for getting it here—" he said reflectively.

"I'll get up that much earlier," said Cy.

He would have stayed up all night to have helped Margaret out. And Margaret threw him a grateful glance.

They looked at the proposition from all sides. It meant a big change in their lives to have city boarders drop down upon them. There was plenty of cold water in the discussion if there was a paucity in the cistern. It was a big thing to have paper-hangers. The painting they would do themselves. They would fix up the house inside, they decided, and then if there was anything left maybe they could put on one outside coat.

"Well, how am I going to be sure of getting my money back?" asked Mr. Sloan at last. It had all been settled and Margaret was jubilant.

"I'll give you my note," she answered promptly. "I know how to make a note. I learned that at school."

"Oh, you did? Well, I've found the main difficulty about a note is knowing how to meet it—not make it! What security can you give?"

"I'll go her security," said Cy. "If she doesn't pay I'll sell the filly."

"Good for you, old Cy!" said Margaret. "We'll stand or fall together."

They got paper and ink in great glee and wrote it out. Farmer Sloan chuckled as he read it.

Polk Summit, June 5, 189—.

Three months after date I promise to pay Thos. H. Sloan, for value received, the sum of forty dollars without interest.

Margaret Sloan.—

"You'll get your interest looking at the paper," she said gayly.

And under her name was laboriously written, for Cy was an indifferent penman, Cyrus Sloan.

"If they only stay four weeks I'm sure of that much," thought Margaret, "and I can do a lot with forty dollars!"

CHAPTER II.

A Will, a Woman and a Pot of Paint.

The very next day Margaret and her father went to town. There was no time to lose, for the middle of June would soon be here.

The paper-hanger was a pleasant young fellow who was a painter as well. He gave Margaret some valuable advice about colors and "dryers" and varnishes, as well as a few other things.

"You'd better select paper for the other rooms," he told her privately. He had heard their plans. "He'll want it done when he sees the parlor. That's the way it goes. I've watched it lots of times. The new makes the old look dingy and if the paper is on the spot, ten to one they'll put it on."

He was to come out the first of the next week. In the meantime she could do the painting, which ought to be dry before he began anyway.

"I'll put in a little extra paint," he said to Mr. Sloan, with a wink at Margaret. "It may come handy. I'll take it back if you don't need it."

While the things were being put into the wagon she went to the one furniture store Polk Summit boasted. She came out with a small heavy package. "We've done without these castors ever since I could remember," she thought, "and they cost just fifteen cents a set! My!"

She and her mother had talked over the furnishing of the room that morning before she started.

"I wish we could have a new bedroom set," she had said with a longing recollection of the white iron bedstead in Ethel's room. One thing always calls for another.

"I wish you could, but it ain't worth while to think of it," her mother answered firmly. "Pa won't stand that. I sounded him last night. He says if he has got to buy any furniture he'll throw over the whole business."

Mr. Sloan had not even priced furniture for a quarter of a century. He did not know it had fallen. Having purchased his modest supply when it was at its highest he had always thought of it as among the stars. After hearing his ultimatum Margaret set her wits to work.

"I wouldn't mind giving up the things in my room," she thought—"I could get along almost anyway for a few weeks—but they look so!"

They did indeed, though she had not noticed it so much before she went to the city. There was a fairly good walnut bedstead, an old-fashioned bureau painted to represent rosewood and bearing the scars of a generation of childish diseases and the remedies therefor. One front castor was gone and two or three books pre-

served the equilibrium from one sweeping day to another. It had had knobs but several were missing, which made it hard when the doors stuck. The washstand was a very old one which in a spasm of aestheticism on some painter's part had once been grained in yellow and brown and given a marble top. The case seemed rather hopeless even if she should dismantle her room completely.

She went in discouragement to the boys' room. There was even less there to draw from. In that community boys' rooms were thought to be completely furnished when they had beds. There were two in this room, showing the unmistakable marks of many a boyish bout.

Margaret laid her hand upon the fluted spindles that formed foot and headboard alike and shook it impatiently. It was slight looking but it stood firm. It had resisted stronger shakes in its day if not more perplexed ones. As she looked at it now a thought took shape in her brain. She stood still, thinking deeply.

"I believe I could do it!" she said. The thought and what it stood for grew before her until it filled a bedroom. "I know I could!"

The days that followed were busy ones to Margaret. There was a beating of carpets, a swish of brooms, and a pervasive smell of fresh paint. Dick declared they ate and slept paint.

"Well, your system has been so entirely free from it all your life that I don't think it will hurt you," Margaret retorted.

The one part of man's work that woman can do well is to paint, and it is also one of the few things that an amateur can do without the result being amateurish. When the "front room" was done it was decided that the dining-room absolutely had to be, and then Mr. Sloan said as they stood admiring that, "Seems to me it makes ma's room look pretty dingy. If you had some more paint now—and the time—"

"I have," said Margaret promptly. And ma's room too had a coat. It was as the painter had said. The work in the parlor was the leaven that leavened the whole lump.

When that apartment emerged from the hands of the paper-hanger Margaret and Cy moved into it the spindle bedstead and the mismatched and decrepit pieces that were to help it make up a "suite." Then Margaret locked the door with herself inside. She guarded the entrance for days. Nobody but the painter knew what was going on.

At last she called them in. There stood a pure white bedroom set, freshly varnished, with smart brass pulls on dresser and commode. The painter came in with them to see her triumph.

"No, sir, she did it all herself," he said. "It was her own notion. I just showed her about sandpapering it off. By jing!" he exclaimed to Mr. Sloan while the others looked at the results in speechless admiration, "if you'll buy the paper for her own room

I'll put in on and it shan't cost you a cent!—just for the pluck of her!"

The day came at last when the city boarders were to arrive. Mrs. Sloan had not been in such a state of mild and pleasurable excitement for many a long and monotonous year. It was almost the pleasure of the child; the responsibility was not hers. She was standing in the door surveying the room to which Margaret was giving the finishing touches. Mr. Sloan had gone to the station for the expected guests.

It was a dainty, tasteful room that Mrs. Sloan looked upon. She hardly knew it. The papered walls and the ceiling were good to look upon, though inexpensive (in these days beauty is not a matter of dollars and cents) and the woodwork harmonized perfectly with it. The effectiveness of the room was thus doubled without the expenditure of one thing but taste. Colors that swear at each other are no cheaper than those that dwell together in peace and harmony.

On the floor was a pretty blue and white matting with two or three rugs that gave the needed brightening. In one corner was a couch made from a spring cot that cost Margaret one dollar and a quarter. She had sawed off the head and foot boards, leaving nothing to interfere with the hang of the cover. Over it was an old-fashioned blue and white coverlet with fringe, and on it a pile of gay pillows. The Sloans had plenty of feathers. The result was a luxurious couch by day and a good bed by night.

In this nest of blue and white immaculate furniture fitted as if it had been planned for it, as—come to think of it—it had. The washstand set was gathered from here and there. The small pitcher had all the earmarks of a large cream jug, and the mug bore the legend "For a good child," but as they were all white nobody questioned their pedigree.

Margaret was just now bringing in the crowning glory—a mass of sweet peas in an old blue and white pitcher.

"Yes, I do feel pretty proud of that furniture," she said in reply to her mother. "It's like the little girl's dress—it is made of rags and gumption!"

To Lilian Barrows, hot and tired and dusty, it looked a very picture of peace and purity.

"What a pretty room!" she cried. "Oh, I know we shall like it! And sweet peas! And this lovely blue pitcher!"

"Will we have to have things served in courses?" Mrs. Sloan had asked apprehensively before they came. She had heard Margaret tell of the course dinners at Ashland Boulevard.

"Certainly not," said Margaret with decision. "We will give them good wholesome country fare and plenty of it—we'll make the table look as pretty as we can, but we won't put on any airs! You can't have course dinners unless you have trained servants

and lots of dishes—and we haven't either. If they are the kind of people I think they are they won't expect it."

And it had not entered into their wildest thoughts. They looked at the luscious strawberries and pitchers of rich cream and congratulated themselves on their happy choice with never a thought of course dinners.

Lilian Barrows was a sweet, unaffected girl, at ease in any company and possessing the happy faculty of making others feel so. They were soon chatting like old friends.

"Mr. Sloan, that's a beautiful field of wheat out there in front," said Lilian enthusiastically.

There was silence for a minute and Dick's lips twitched.

"Yes. That's a meadow," explained the farmer.

"Well, isn't it a meadow of wheat? I was sure I knew wheat." Lilian had been betrayed into the folly of trying to air the small knowledge she possessed.

"A meadow is grass," Mr. Sloan volunteered again, while Cy and Dick looked religiously at their plates.

"Oh, of course! that was a meadow that we passed through where the cows were eating and there were those beautiful trees."

"No, that was the pasture."

"Why, that was grass!" Lilian knew but one kind.

"Yes, but this is timothy."

"Timothy! well, I'll give it up," said Lilian, joining in the laugh. "Anyway, I didn't ask which was the buttermilk cow!"

That night Mr. Sloan was awakened by a creaking door and his whispered name. His room was just across the hall from Mrs. Barrows and her daughter.

"There's some one trying to get in," whispered Lilian. "We were awakened by the queer sound. I know it must be a burglar. It stops for a while and then it begins again."

"We don't have any burglars out here," said Mr. Sloan. "I guess you dreamed it." But he promised to come right in and investigate.

When he got there Mrs. Barrows was shaking in bed with a nervous chill. Lilian in a bath-robe sat on the cot listening for a recurrence of the burglar's efforts. They kept still as death.

"There!" whispered Lillian excitedly. "There it is again!"

"That!" ejaculated Mr. Sloan. "Why, that's the chimney swallows!"

Lilian gave a gasp. "Chimney swallows! why, I was sure it was a burglar. I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Sloan, for troubling you."

"No trouble at all," he assured her as politely as if it were the joy of his life to get up at two o'clock in the morning to chase spooks. To his wife a little later he said with more regard for veracity: "I wonder if I'm going to be called up every night by a pair of numskulls that don't know a bird from a burglar!"

CHAPTER III.

The Half-hour Reading Club.

Lilian Barrows was lying one day in the hammock which upon her arrival she had promptly hung on the sheltered, shady porch. Margaret had painted the porch with the odds and ends of three shades mixed together. It turned out a good nondescript color, and with the rugs daily brought out by Lilian, the little table for the books and work, and the shimmer of light through the vines, the porch made a most attractive sitting-room.

"We may as well have it pretty," Lilian had said, putting a glass of nasturtiums on the table.

"Why, of course," Margaret returned thoughtfully. "But I never had thought of fixing up a porch."

There the two mothers rocked and crocheted and knit while Lilian read to them—a luxurious kind of life that Mrs. Sloan felt almost guilty to enjoy so much. But Margaret had set her foot down firmly against her mother's sharing the burdens of this busy summer and the tired housewife after a brief struggle gave it up and settled down comfortably to a long-delayed season of rest. It was almost as if she had been given an outing. New surroundings and agreeable companions provided a change of scene without even a change of place. She thrived upon it. And the novels Lilian read to them took her out of Polk Summit on many a little journey into the world. Many people are mentally starving for new things to think about.

Of this pleasant life of leisure Margaret got but glimpses. That some may rest others must work, and on the Sloan place that summer Margaret by her own volition was the burden-bearer. But work with an object in view and a reward before us is not without its compensations, especially when one has the stimulus of appreciation.

And yet it cannot be denied that Margaret did have her seasons of dejection that summer. It was not over the work—she had fortified herself against that—it was when she compared herself with Lilian Barrows and thought of the difference in their opportunities.

"No wonder she knows so much about books and pictures and things," she thought half bitterly. "She has all the time there is to read and study, and I—well, I wouldn't have an hour a day, all told, I suppose."

Margaret had been a good scholar in school. She had led her class always. But when her school-days were over she supposed her education was finished. In point of fact a bare foundation was laid. The rest must be done by herself if it were done at all. She had had like most girls a dream of going to boarding-school, but it had never come to anything. Somehow she had

never felt her lack as she did this summer—and yet it was the “divine discontent.”

“Come and lie down in the hammock, Margaret,” said Lilian, as the girl appeared in the door clad in her afternoon dress. “I’m tired of it.”

“You are always tired of what you think somebody else needs,” said Margaret. But she was gratified at the thought for her comfort, and it was a rest to stretch out in the hammock. The two mothers had gone in for their afternoon naps and the girls were alone. Margaret made herself comfortable for a rest until it was time to go about supper. This was their time always for a good talk, for the two young girls had become fast friends.

“I have just finished my half-hour,” said Lilian, putting up her watch, “and now I am spoiling for a talk.”

“What do you mean by your half-hour. It seems to me the hours are all yours.”

“I guess it does seem to you that I waste a lot of time reading—you are always so busy. But mama enjoys it and so do I. You know mama can’t use her eyes so much, and so I’ve got in the habit of reading to her all my spare time. I think your mother likes it too.”

“Oh, she does! I heard her say yesterday she had not enjoyed anything for years as she had your reading aloud.”

“Don’t you ever read books together? I enjoy a story so much more when I read it with mama. We talk it over, you know, and I get so much more out of it.”

“We don’t have many books,” said Margaret. “I don’t think I ever read one aloud. And I love to read too—”

“And your mother certainly loves to listen—”

“Yes. But somehow I never have got at it. Never thought of it, I guess.” She was thinking of it now, certainly, with a vivid regret as those long winter evenings rose up before her. Her mother could not use her eyes much either. “You didn’t tell me about your half-hour. Is that when you read with your watch open?”

“Yes. It is my half-hour of solid reading and I have to keep track of the time. I get awfully interested sometimes and want to keep on, but the club rules say a half-hour—no more and no less—so I have to stop when the time is up. Then sometimes I am not in the humor for it and a half-hour seems a long time. But I keep at it.”

“How did you happen to think of it?”

“Well, it was this way. When I came out of school I thought I would keep up my studies or read history or something to keep from getting rusty—but it is awfully hard to do anything like that without a plan or something to hold you to it, don’t you know? I’d begin all right but I never would keep it up. If I

lived in the country, now, I think I'd accomplish more."

Margaret opened her eyes. "I guess you'd find you didn't have any too much time in the country," she said drily. "I was thinking that in the city you would have all there was."

"Oh, mercy, no! There is always something to do, somewhere to go, or somebody to see, and the first thing you know the time is all gone and nothing accomplished. Anyway, that is the way it was with me. My time was just frittered away. I had a good time, and I read the new novels as they came out, but as to doing the two hours a day of studying that I had planned—why, it was just out of the question. And still I did want to do something."

Margaret stopped rocking and sat up. How familiar that feeling was! She had never determined like Lilian to do systematic reading, but she had felt the same unrest, the same dissatisfaction with a life in which there was no more study. Every real student has it.

"Well, I happened to hear of this Half-Hour Reading Club, and I thought I'd try it. It is a Philadelphia club started by a lady who died, and it has been kept up since as a memorial of her. Isn't that a beautiful way to keep her memory green? I like it ever so much. I find that it isn't the great amount of time but the persistent doing it every day that counts. How many pages do you suppose one could read in a year, just reading a half-hour a day?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"Well, I hadn't till I began. I thought when I read the reports that people were simply fibbing. But I read over six thousand pages last year. You know it has to be solid reading—anything but fiction."

"Six thousand! How many books did you read?"

"Eighteen. And I read them all carefully too. I didn't try to see how big a list I could have. There are two prizes offered for the best lists—not necessarily the longest—but the most carefully selected."

"What did you read about?"

"I took art as my general subject, because I felt so frightfully deficient in that, and you know in the city one sees a good many pictures and statues and things like that that you ought to know about. Well, that year's study opened my eyes to things I had been looking at all my life and yet had never seen."

"Does it cost much to join?"

"No. It is only twenty-five cents. Then you pay a penny for every day lost."

"Does everybody have to study art?" She was thinking that that would not help her much.

"Oh, no. You can take anything that interests you. Margaret, suppose you try it. You love to read."

"I wouldn't have the books," said Margaret hopelessly. "You had the public library."

Lilian was silent. What would she have done without the library?

"It would be pretty hard to get along without a library," she admitted. "But mama always says there is more in knowing how to use what you have than in having a great deal. Maybe that's so about books. You have some, of course."

"Oh, we have a few up stairs in a box. But they are mostly school books."

They talked it all over and as Margaret heard the simple plan outlined the old student blood was stirred within her. She loved to read; she certainly could give half an hour a day; and there were so many things to learn—so many that she wanted to know.

"What would I read?" she asked.

"My teacher used to say, 'Begin with the thing that interests you.' What did you like best when you were in school?"

"History," said Margaret promptly. "And I would like to know something about writers."

"History and Literature. That would make a lovely course. You have a United States History?"

"Yes, just a school history."

"That's good to start with. You'll find that it will seem like a different book to you now that you are a woman. You'll read it with different eyes. And Margaret—"

She took up the book that she had just finished. It was Pancoast's American Literature. She had thought a moment before that she would never part with it. She laid it now in Margaret's hands.

"I'm going to give you this for a start in literature. I'm through with it, you know. It is a library in itself."

Margaret took the book longingly. "Oh, I couldn't let you do it," she said. "Not that I wouldn't like to have it. It's lovely. I read some in it one day about Longfellow. I have Longfellow's Poems that I got for a prize at school. But I couldn't let you give this to me—I really couldn't."

"I don't see how you are going to help it," laughed Lilian. "It's already done. Let's look at the books up stairs."

They ran up the stairway, forgetful of its being hot, of their being tired, of everything but the pressing need of arranging a reading course. Sitting on the floor in the hall they went to the bottom of the small box in which the Sloan books were safely interred.

"I should think you'd get more good of these if they were easier to get at," suggested Lilian.

"We would. Nobody will ever go to the bottom of a box for a book. You'll go without. But we haven't any bookcase."

"Couldn't you get two or three soap boxes and nail them together for shelves? I've seen the girls at school do that. Nicely stained and set on a table it makes quite a good little bookcase. Or I should think Dick might make you some shelves."

"Dick can't drive a nail straight," said Margaret scornfully. "Jeff Heminway is real handy with tools," she added with the pink color that Jeff's name always brought, "but Dick is no earthly good at such things."

Lilian remembered this and had a little private conference with Jeff the first time he came over. Margaret's birthday came soon. Jeff asked a few questions and then nodded brightly. "I'll get the curtain ready," she whispered as Margaret came in. The result of the conference, we may as well say now, was a beautiful set of book shelves, nicely stained and moving easily on castors. In front hung a silklike curtain parted slightly in the middle to disclose the very modest Sloan library massed judiciously in the center, the great vacancies at the sides discreetly hidden by the curtain. It had the appearance of a well-filled bookcase on remarkably small capital. How many rosy hopes went into the making we will not say, but Jeff was given to seeing visions and dreaming dreams, and a small bookcase is an easy thing to fit into a snug little house—especially one in air.

But all that was later. Today there was just the box of books. It was rather a forlorn collection from which to fashion a reading course. Scott's Commentary, one volume of Josephus, some school books, a part of Uncle Tom's Cabin—bearing marks of more handling than did the Commentary, several readers running up into the high numbers, a United States History, and a Life of Washington.

Lilian took the histories and the readers down stairs, leaving Margaret to replace the rest. She looked up enthusiastically as Margaret appeared.

"Margaret! This is a jewel—this old reader. It has extracts from all the poets worth reading and ever so many historical pieces. This will give you a good start."

They took the old readers—compendiums of choice literature that they are—and went to work marking on the margin of the history the page of the historical selections bearing upon that point. The Literature they treated with more respect, writing slips with the name and page of the selection from the reader and putting them into the proper place.

"Now you can study the life of the author from the book and then read the selections, and perhaps memorize some of them. I would." (Margaret began that night over the dishes. It short-

ened the time immensely.) "And Margaret! here are biographical sketches of every one of these writers! Now who says you haven't material for the study of history and literature! All this wealth around you and you didn't know it!"

It was the old story of things coming our way when we are looking for them.

"Is this club just for ladies?" asked Margaret. She was thinking of Jeff Heminway's Historical Reader, and—well—she and Jeff had stood side by side in school. Perhaps—

"Why, no. Anybody can join it. If you know of anybody in the neighborhood that would like to do it it would be ever so much nicer for two to plan a course together."

"I don't know that I do," said Margaret. But when Jeff left the horse block that night he said, "I'll bring the reader over in a few days, Margaret. But I know you'll beat me. You always did."

CHAPTER IV.

A New Departure in Bethel Church.

It was Saturday afternoon—a hot Saturday afternoon in July. The men had just gone to the field. The others lingered around the table. Margaret was taking a stolen resting spell. It is hard to keep one's enthusiasm from oozing away in July weather.

A neighbor drove by at this moment and called out to Mamie, "Here's your mail, sis."

There was a letter for Mrs. Sloan, an unusual thing since Margaret returned. Mrs. Barrows and Lillian took their portion to the porch and the girls awaited with interest the opening of the letter.

"Margaret! It is from Mrs. Montessor. She is coming to make a visit!"

If Mrs. Sloan had been announcing her friend's sudden demise she would not have used a sadder tone.

Margaret had had a hard morning in the kitchen—a Saturday morning of scorching heat. "Well, we just cannot have her," she said in a tone of desperate determination.

"We'll have to have her! She writes that she is coming." To the dear lady with her warm-hearted country ways this settled it. "What else could we do?" she asked, seeing rebellion in Margaret's eyes.

"Just exactly what she would do—write to her and tell her that our rooms are occupied and that it will not be convenient for her to come at this time. That is the way city people do—and I think it is a pretty sensible way, too."

"I would feel disgraced!" Mrs. Sloan spoke with unwonted

warmth. "I am afraid we will have to let the boarders go."

"Well, we won't let them go," said Margaret with emphasis. "This is my venture, mother. You mustn't interfere with it. I've got that note to meet and I am not going to turn off boarders this summer for any visitor that lives. They are more like friends than Mrs. Montessoro, anyway."

As usual Mrs. Sloan was overruled, and Margaret posted off to write the letter. "If she's coming next week I've got to head her off," she said grimly.

It was imperative that it should go at once, but there was nobody to take it to the office.

"If I had a horse I would go," said Lilian. She had been learning to ride and felt the over-confidence of newly-acquired knowledge.

"I'll saddle old Kit," said Margaret eagerly. "If you only would!" The getting on was Lilian's bugbear. She was like the politicians—she could keep her seat, but it was hard to secure it.

The trip in was safely made. It was uneventful except for her meeting an old lady in a buggy and wondering how they could pass. The country woman after a swift, comprehensive survey of her horsemanship settled this by turning out and giving her the road. She was getting along finely on the return trip when as ill luck would have it the handle of her handbag gave way and the bag was precipitated to the ground.

Lilian stopped and looked at it in wide-eyed consternation. The bag held her pocketbook. She simply had to get it. But—with no horse-blocks—and nobody—

"Well! there's nothing else to do," she said desperately.

She rode up to a fence and dismounted. It was easier than she had feared. Securing the bag she essayed with rising courage to get on. She mounted the fence and drew Kit's head toward her. Her head only—her body, alas! was at a safe distance away!

"I'll have to get down and lead her up," she thought, after ineffectual cluckings and coaxing, "and then how will I get on the fence without scaring her off?"

She led the recreant animal up resolutely, saying reassuring things to her which were entirely superfluous except as they reacted upon herself, for Kit was quite self-possessed. Well might she be indeed, for she was the mistress of the situation. Holding the bridle tight, her heart in her mouth, Lilian climbed to the top rail. She was ready for the fearful jump.

"Whoa, Kit, whoa!" Before she could take it Kit stepped alertly around and looked up at her as much as to say, "Did you ever get left?" It seemed to Lilian when this had been repeated three or four times that the wretched creature actually winked. Miss Lilian Barrows who often led the grand march and

carried a train of followers whithersoever she would was completely balked by a Polk Summit mare!

It was a mile to the Sloan place; it seemed ten before she got there.

"Another time I think I'd let the purse go," she said as she fanned herself and poured her woes into Margaret's sympathetic ears. "But there's one consolation. I've stopped Mrs. Montessoro." She knew Margaret's feelings in the matter and sympathized with them. She had not forgotten the episode of the housemaid's cap.

"Miss Barrows, will you drive to church with us," asked Dick the next morning, "or would you rather ride Kit?"

"I think I'll drive," Lilian returned. "I find that riding old Kit is not conducive to a spiritual frame of mind."

After church they were driving along the pleasant country lane past yards ablaze with summer blossoms.

"I wondered today, Margaret, why you didn't use some of the wealth of flowers around here to brighten up the church. Don't you ever decorate it?"

"We never have," said Margaret.

"Do they object to it?"

"No, I guess not. I don't know that anybody has ever thought of it. What is everybody's business is nobody's, you know. Then in a country church they are not so apt to do those things."

"I don't see why. I should think they would be the very ones that would—they have so much to draw from. In the city we have to buy flowers most of the year—but here—well, I sat there today and planned how we could trim the church. You know I am on the flower committee at home, and I just naturally plan decorations wherever I go. Haven't you any Young People's Society?"

"We tried to have one once, but there didn't seem to be anything to hold them together and we gave it up. Nobody went but a few of the girls anyway."

"Do you suppose they'd mind if we trimmed the church next Sunday?"

"No, I guess not. I don't know that anybody would have the time to do it—"

"I would. I'd love to."

"I'll help," said Dick. Margaret wanted to whistle. Dick! "I can take you over, anyway," he added, a little confusedly.

"Oh, will you?" cried Lilian. "Let's do it and not let Margaret know what it's going to be."

The next Saturday afternoon Dick and Lilian got into the spring wagon and drove off. One would have thought they were going to can fruit for the neighborhood from the number of jars and glass cans they took along. Lilian had taken sundry walks in the vicinity during the week and knew just where to go. She

had sent to the city too for a small parcel which had arrived but that morning.

She and Margaret had got the minister's consent to the trimming of the church. It was an innovation, but he promised to stand between them and the wrath of Deacon Judkins, who had opposed an organ and might fairly be expected to frown upon flowers.

There was never a simpler adornment of a church or one more effective. Ferns and daisies—that was all—but the bare little church was glorified. Even Mrs. Sloan's stone jars looked dignified encased in leaf-colored green. It was crepe paper of this unobtrusive tint with narrow ribbon to match that Lilian had sent to the city for.

"Of course I'd like to have jardinières but these are all right," she mused as she stood off and looked at the swaying ferns and the starry blossoms. "How can anybody think it is sinful to use in God's service what He has given us?"

There was a stir among the congregation that morning. Bethel church had never been decorated before.

"Is there going to be a wedding?" whispered Mrs. Alford as she looked around. And Deacon Judkins looked blackly at the innocent daisies as if they were the agencies of the Evil One. He had forgotten that even the great Teacher used the lilies of the field to point His lessons.

Harriet Landon, who loved flowers, caught her breath. "Isn't it heavenly!" she thought.

Naturally, there was a good deal of talk about it when the service was over. The older people thought it was a lot of bother for nothing, but the younger ones lingered about and looked their pleasure. Why shouldn't they have flowers as well as anybody else? Harriet Landon had gone straight to where Lilian stood.

"It is the prettiest thing I ever saw," she said enthusiastically. "I wish you'd do it again and use some of my flowers."

"You do it," said Lilian, "and I'll help. We will take it for next Sunday."

They had a little conference before parting. "Bring plenty of them," said Lilian, "and some glass bowls."

When Sunday came there was a perceptible increase in the congregation. The decoration of the church had been widely discussed, pro and con, and some of the dilatory ones concluded they had better be seeing what was going on. They came expecting ferns and daisies. What they saw was very far from the modest star-faced blossoms with hearts of gold. Harriet Landon was having a nasturtium Sunday.

The bowls were heaped with them, the organ was overrun, a tall glass vase showed their beautiful stems and lifted a few blossoms high above the rest, a long branch trailed from the desk.

There were nasturtiums of every shade from darkest red to palest yellow—and nothing but nasturtiums.

Well, the front of that church was one magnificent glow of color. And Deacon Judkins was more scandalized than ever. Perhaps white flowers were not really sinful—they were used at funerals and weddings—but such gay colors as these—well! the whole thing was of the devil!

There is no doubt that Deacon Judkins' outspoken opposition was instrumental in crystallizing the enthusiasm of the Bethel church young people into a determination to have flowers every Sunday. Human nature is put up that way. And perhaps in no easier manner could unreasonable opposition be overruled for good.

A committee was formed to lay plans for continuing the decorations as a permanent thing through the summer. They met with Margaret, and Lilian was asked to be its chairman.

"Yes," she said frankly, "I'd love to do it. It isn't often I get so many flowers to work with. If one of you will help me each time—"

And so it was settled.

"Let's have a different flower for every Sunday, girls. Why, certainly they would hold out. We could have sweet peas and gladioli, and wild clematis twined about everything, and golden rod with just a dash of cardinal flowers, and dahlias of all colors!"

Before they separated she turned to the girl nearest her.

"Will you provide the flowers for next Sunday? You know I don't know what you all have."

The girl shrank back. She lived in a home barren of beauty and the rest all knew it.

"I can't," she said hastily. "I'll help, and be glad to, but we haven't any flowers—nothing at all but—"

The word was lost to all but Lilian. It was spoken in a shame-faced way as if she were afraid of being heard.

"Oh! Have you lots of them? Different sizes?"

"Oceans," said the girl with brightening face. "But would you dare?"

"Dare? Of course I would. But don't you tell a soul."

When Sunday came the church was a blaze of gold. There were sunflowers of every size, from the whole mammoth bush transplanted bodily into corners and niches and covered with blossoms as big as saucers to the tiny ones not larger than Black-eyed Susans that were banked about the pulpit. The coarse seedy kind had been ruled out.

"It's the prettiest yet," said Harriet Landon to the girl that brought them, and the girl's face was radiant.

And so on through that summer the procession of flowers moved on in Bethel church. There was always something new. The congregation—the younger part of it, anyway—used to wonder

what the flowers would be that day and how they would be arranged. Using one thing at a time as they did really secured two ends; a succession of flowers and variety of arrangement. The grouping had to suit the plant. Naturally, one cannot arrange sunflowers and vines according to the same pattern.

It was not much trouble. It did not take much time. It took only thought and concert of action. Nothing ever brought the young people of Bethel church together as did this work. There is a cohesive power in a common purpose.

Lilian planned and they executed. Finally Harriet Landon who lived near the church began to plan too. Lilian was to leave the work in her hands.

"Flowers preach to us if we listen," says Christina Rossetti.

To the worshipers at Bethel church they brought a varied message. To Mary Barton, the girl of the cheerless home, it was the gospel of beauty; never again would her dooryard have only sunflowers. To Harriet Landon it was the gospel of service—taking the things she loved and bringing them as an offering to Him she served. To many a weary saint, ready to faint from his burden, it was a sermon of our Father's thought for our happiness—just our happiness. Somehow that brought Him nearer than if He had thought only about our well-being. It was preached silently by Nature's succession from the daffodils to the dahlias.

To Margaret—tired, impatient Margaret—struggling against her limitations, chafing at her environment, it brought a message that was to ennoble life forever—it told of the beauty of common things—homely duties, and how they might be glorified and invested with dignity and made to brighten all around them if only they were taken as were these flowers—in the right way. It did not come to her all at once, but it sank deeper and deeper into her heart as the weeks went by.

Beneficent ministry of flowers, to Deacon Judkins only did they say no word.

CHAPTER V.

Margaret Takes the Bit between Her Teeth.

It had been a day of sweltering, blistering heat—the kind that makes a housekeeper languid at the thought of breakfast, cross to contemplate dinner, and desperate at the prospect of entering the fiery furnace for the third time. If only people didn't have to eat! has been the burden of many a mid-summer cry.

At half past four it was doing its worst. Margaret, sitting on the porch in a fresh shirt waist and immaculate collar, thought of a fire with loathing. But the clock ticked relentlessly on. There was no help for it! Meal time on a farm is as inevitable as death and taxes. The elder ladies must have their tea, and the Sloan men had the potato habit.

Leaving the rest on the shady piazza, the girl resolutely turned her steps toward the kitchen, taking off her collar as she went.

"I won't take off the waist!" she said. She did later with a smut on the stiff cuff, a limpness down the back, and angry impatience in her heart. "I might as well give up trying to look like anything!" she muttered.

"Don't leave the door open, mother," she said sharply a quarter of an hour later. "This heat pours into the dining-room till it's as hot as an oven in there. I wish we didn't have to have a fire just for supper. It heats up everything so."

"Why, child, how could you get supper without a fire?"

Mrs. Sloan looked at her in mild surprise. She never quite got used to Margaret's way of wishing that things were different—things that had always been so and always would be.

Margaret was thinking of the kitchen on Ashland Boulevard with its gas range and manifold conveniences. "Country people don't half know how to live anyway," she thought crossly. That glimpse of a well-ordered, well-furnished kitchen had opened her eyes to a knowledge of good and evil. "They don't have things to do with. If we couldn't afford it I wouldn't say a word, but there are lots of little conveniences that we might just as well have as not."

Mrs. Sloan was placidly picking over the berries on the back porch. She had wanted to do it in the hot kitchen with a vague feeling that it would help Margaret if she was uncomfortable too, but it had been sternly interdicted.

The girl went about the kitchen with her blood at fever heat, and while she was musing, the fire burned in the big stove, sending its fiery breath throughout the house and in her tired, disgusted soul.

"Of course we can't have gas," she was thinking, "and pa says a gasoline stove shall never come into the house. I suppose

they are dangerous if they are carelessly handled, but I declare I'd rather be blown up once a year than sizzle this way all summer!—I wouldn't mind it if I could only dress after the work is done up and stay so!" The waist came off just then. "But the trouble is you can't keep decent in the afternoon any more than you can in the morning."

All at once a light came into her eyes and a look of relief.

"I'll do it!" she said resolutely. "I'll never have another chance!"

While the potatoes were boiling she went outside and sat down on the steps.

"Mother," she began abruptly, and there was the trumpet sound of war in her voice, "I am going to get an oil stove."

"An oil stove! Why, child, it ain't a year since we got a new stove. It was while Miss Elviry was here. Pa never would consent to it—never!"

"I know it. And so I'm not going to ask him. I am going to send for it without saying a word to him about it."

"Margaret!" Mrs. Sloan looked at her daughter as if she thought she had taken leave of her senses.

"Mother, it's my money. I've worked for it. Why shouldn't I spend it as I want to? I told pa I would use every cent of it on the house, but I didn't say I would put it all in paint. I will save out enough to pay off my note and the rest I am going to put into the things that will bring us the most comfort. I don't think pa ought to object to that, and what's more I don't believe he will. He's come clear around about the ice."

"Yes," admitted Mrs. Sloan, "he told me last night he didn't think we'd ever try to get along without it another season—but that was his own proposing—that makes a difference you know."

"Well, of course he will never propose an oil stove for he will never see that we need one. But I don't know of anything that would give us more solid comfort, do you? Think of being able to get supper without heating up the house, or changing your dress. My! And if we are going to get it at all we may as well do it at once and get the good out of it while they are here." This was but a few weeks after Mrs. Barrows and Lilian came. Margaret was still struggling with insufficient supplies of various things.

At this moment there was an odor of potato water in contact with a hot surface (familiar to all cooks) that sent Margaret inside, but she was no longer impatient or hopeless. One can stand anything when the end is in view.

The order for the oil stove went off the next day, and with it a letter to Louise Elkins. Margaret's declaration of independence had fired her blood. It led, like some other declarations, to more than was at first intended.

"I've sent Louise a list of things I want her to get me in the city," Margaret said to her mother the next morning. "We've never had enough tablecloths and sheets and towels in our lives, and I've got the money in my hands now and I'm going to have them. I've washed and ironed a tablecloth the last of the week ever since they've been here and there's no sense in it. It doesn't cost any more to have enough things to do with than half enough, if you can get hold of the money to buy them with in the first place—and this is our chance."

And poor Mrs. Sloan, who had always done on a three-quarter supply, stood by aghast at Margaret's temerity.

"And I've sent for a croquette basket and a can-opener and a Dover egg beater!" she went on. "We've opened cans with a hatchet ever since I can remember—and a can opener costs five cents!"

Mrs. Sloan thought of getting a cold cloth for Margaret's head. She had never heard of a croquette basket.

It was a week before the oil stove arrived. Margaret went to Polk Summit for it herself. She did not want anybody to know about it till it was up and at work. She bound her mother over to secrecy—not a difficult thing to do, for Mrs. Sloan was too fearful of the effect upon her husband and the family peace to think of divulging it.

"I'm like old Mrs. Means," Margaret said gaily as they stood around it when it was placed on its pedestal, "'While you're gittin', git a plenty, says I.'" She had been listening to "The Hoosier Schoolmaster" out on the porch. "I thought if I had three burners I could get a whole meal—cook meat, boil potatoes and make coffee—and this was my chance!"

It happened that Mr. Hoard, their nearest neighbor, came over that afternoon to borrow a brace and bit. It is not so convenient to borrow as to own but Mr. Hoard found it cheaper.

Margaret had the stove filled and lighted. She wanted to experiment a little before she committed herself to it for a meal.

"Mr. Hoard," she said, stepping to the dining-room where her mother and the visitor sat, "come and see my new stove."

He went to the kitchen and Mrs. Sloan followed. Margaret explained enthusiastically the workings of her new possession. Mr. Hoard looked at it in silence until she was through. Then he said somewhat pointedly:

"Do you s'pose your pa'll be able to hold out, Margaret, the way you're goin' since you was to the city?"

Margaret turned her burners all down and then up again before she spoke. When she did there was a sparkle in her eyes which Mr. Hoard was too nearsighted to see.

"I guess so," she said drily, "it didn't seem to break him up when he got the boys the sulky plow."

"Wa'al," he said, "mebbe not—but I don't know—I'm glad my woman folks ain't the hankerin' kind. My wife she's pretty middlin' reasonable."

"How is she this summer?" Mrs. Sloan hastened to ask, fearing a "hot time" not altogether due to the weather.

"She's real miserable this summer, mother is. Hot weather don't seem to agree with her. She was all wore out after the threshers got through. I tell her seems like anybody that can stay in the shade all day hadn't ought to complain."

"She needs a summer stove," said Margaret with decision. "It's enough to wear out any woman to stand over a hot stove weather like this and cook for threshers! I know! I've been there!"

The family sat down that night to a supper of ham and eggs, French fried potatoes (cooked in the new croquette basket immersed in boiling fat) and fragrant tea, to say nothing of the usual concomitants of cake and berries and cream. It was cooked in just twenty minutes, and Margaret sat down with the rest, clothed and in her right mind.

The subject of the stove was not broached until Mrs. Barrows and Lilian had left the table. Mrs. Sloan was nervous and expectant. Mamie took her seat beside Margaret with a vague feeling that her moral support would be needed when the shock came.

Mr. Sloan and the boys were talking about a feed grinder that they ought to have.

"Pa," said Margaret, "what would you think if Dick should come in some day and say that he had taken his own money and bought that feed grinder for the use of the family and you needn't bother any more about it?"

Mr. Sloan tilted back his chair and looked quizzically at her. "I'd say he was a pretty enterprising boy," he said.

Margaret rose and went toward the kitchen.

"Well, come and see what you would say about your daughter."

They all followed. The kettle was singing merrily over the one burner that had not been turned out. The room was as comfortable as the one they had left.

"I bought this," Margaret said in a voice that was a little tremulous with excitement, but that showed no fear, "with the money that I have sweated over the fire this summer to get. I got it because I think women ought to spare themselves all they can, and this summer I could save you the expense of getting it. Was it all right?"

Mr. Sloan was looking hard at the steaming kettle. His first impulse was to turn upon her in anger. But—she had made the money—she unquestionably had the right to spend it—and it must have been hot!

"It's all right," he said slowly, and Mrs. Sloan breathed again. Then he added in the jocular tone he had used in the other room:

"Mother, we've got a pretty enterprising girl."

Ah! Mr. Sloan, we don't learn all our lessons before we are twenty!

CHAPTER VI.

How the Traveling Library Came to Polk Summit.

The young people of the Sloan place were having a very social time out under the trees one Sunday afternoon—Lilian and Dick and Margaret and Jeff, with Mamie flitting about and Cy a little way off reading a book of Lilian's. It seemed almost as if there had been a revival of learning in the Sloan family. Measles and whooping-cough are not the only infectious things in the world.

"Yes, I'm getting along splendidly," Margaret was saying to Jeff, "and you know I never would have done any reading this summer if I hadn't had a plan. As it is I've read all this and I never miss the time."

"Do you read at night?" asked Jeff.

"No. I read when I sit down to rest in the afternoon."

"Well, excuse me!" said Dick. "I'd rather rest on something softer than United States History!"

"If I just had some more books," Margaret went on. "I hate to give it up but I am nearly at the end of my row."

"Why don't you start a book club?" asked Lilian. "We have one at home."

"How do you manage it?"

"We pay a dollar each to join. Then we have a purchasing committee to keep track of the new books and invest the money. A few can do that better than a whole club, you know—but anybody can make suggestions. The books are in paper covers and a list of the subscribers put on the outside. They are passed around in that order, so all have an even show. We do it because it is so hard to get the new books from the library."

"What do you do with the books?" asked Jeff.

"Sometimes we draw for them at the end of the year and sometimes we auction them off. A book will be put up and the girls will bid on it. If it is anything that one really wants of course she will bid up in order to get it. Then that money starts our fund for the next year."

"Say, I think that would be a pretty good scheme," Jeff said to Margaret. "If you'll get it up I'll join."

"Never could do it in the world," returned Margaret. "In the first place, girls would be the ones that would want to go into any such thing and the girls around here don't have any dollars to spend that way."

"Well, make it less than a dollar," suggested Lilian. "Books

are very cheap now. Or you might make it a loan library and each put in a book instead of a dollar."

"We might manage that," said Margaret thoughtfully, and the more she thought the more attractive it seemed to her.

"I'll contribute Scott's Commentary," said Dick, not looking up from the knife he was tossing from the ends of his fingers to an upright posture in the ground.

"You haven't any to contribute. It's pa's. Will you give a dollar?"

"Yes—I'll give a dollar," stopping with uplifted knife. "I think it's a good scheme. I'm not much of a reader myself—don't need to be—but I'll do that much for the sake of my ignorant relatives."

"You might make it a dollar or a book," suggested Lilian again. "The main thing is to get it started. Then everybody will see how nice it is, and the plans will come to you."

"I'm afraid that wouldn't help me much about my reading course at last," said Margaret. "Everybody would want novels, and—I guess I would myself."

"I'll tell you what to do," cried Lilian. "Send for a traveling library. That's just the thing! I wonder I didn't think of that at first."

"What is a traveling library?"

"Why, they have a way of making up a library nowadays of fifty or so volumes and sending them to people who want books."

"Who does?"

"Sometimes it is done by the state libraries and sometimes by the women's clubs. They have taken it up in connection with their club work."

"Do you have to pay to join?"

"No, they are free traveling libraries, as the name says."

"How do they get their money back?" asked Dick.

"They don't get their money back. They give it for the sake of putting reading matter in the hands of people who haven't it and want it."

"Oh, come now," said Dick incredulously, "that's a little too good for this world!"

"Indeed it isn't," Lilian replied with warmth, "they're doing it all over the country. They let each library stay about three months in a place and then send another. Why don't you try it, Margaret?"

They talked it over long and earnestly. Lilian did not know exactly where to apply, but she knew where to find out, which is always the next best thing.

They got pencil and paper and started a petition, going into the house to have it started by Mr. and Mrs. Sloan. Dick wrote his name with a flourish and Mamie brought up the rear.

The real benefactors in the world are the people who get

things started. Nowadays agencies of this kind are so systematized that you have but to press the button and the rest is done. But it is necessary to know where the button is and how to press it.

It was so easy a matter to get the traveling library at Polk Summit that they wondered they had not done it long before. A little correspondence, a little work in getting petitioners—and the work was done. The committee having the library in charge was as happy to receive an earnest petition for it as the signers were to have their request granted.

The principal difficulty at first was the need of a suitable place to keep the books and a librarian to take charge of them. Various plans were discussed, all of which had their objections. At last it was decided that by all odds the best and most convenient distributing point would be the church.

The books had come in a neat oak case and this could be kept in the back of the church if only the church authorities would consent. Deacon Judkins was dead against it. He looked at the floral decorations with lowering brow and said something about an opening wedge and the camel's nose. But the minister of Bethel church was a broad-minded man who felt that the Lord's house was not coming down from its high estate when it became the center of all efforts for the betterment of the community. He stood by the young people and finally brought the rest to his way of thinking.

The result was that one Sunday in August found Margaret Sloan in the librarian's chair with a lead pencil and a fresh blank book for doing clerical work, with Jeff Heminway beside her to aid in the distribution of the books. He had told Margaret that if she would take the place he would come by for her every Sunday and take her over a little earlier than the family went, and would stay and take her home after she was through. Jeff seemed willing—even anxious—to deny himself thus for the cause. As Assistant Librarian of course it was his duty to stand by her—and he did.

We all like to get something for nothing. Perhaps it was this feeling as much as anything that prompted the first borrowers to draw books. The number of patrons was small in the beginning, but a taste for books grows with what it feeds upon. Before the three months was up there was a steadily growing list of patrons, and a call for another library.

The summer was wearing away. The roadsides were bright with goldenrod—harbinger of coming change—and there was in the air the indescribable prophecy of autumn.

It had been a summer of care and hard work to Margaret, but all her summers were that, and this had brought pleasures of a kind that no other ever had. Vistas opened before her through which she could see pleasant paths, and they all led up.

It is a red-letter day in our lives when we see the birth of a friendship or a hope.

To the city girl it had been a season of happiness without alloy. The most trivial thing is a pleasure when it bears the charm of novelty. Lilian Barrows hunted eggs with Mamie, and waded in the creek with a child's abandon. She had missed these joys in childhood; she would have them now. She grew vain of her store of rural acquirements as we all do of knowledge newly gained.

The day that saw a tiny stream of milk issuing from under her convulsive grasp was a day of triumph (if one of subsequent gasoline and labor). That stream went up her sleeve, into her lap, around her feet, and over the admiring spectators summoned by shrieks that made the long-suffering gentle cow move on—but the conquest was made. She had milked!

Her ambition was dauntless. She drove to town one day and on her return had the horse out of the buggy before Margaret could stay her hand. She had called on Mamie to help her. They came to the house with perspiring brows.

"Yes, it was a little harder than I expected," she acknowledged, "but I guess we did it thoroughly. I unbuckled everything in sight."

And Dick said savagely to Margaret that night:

"Who in thunder has been at that harness? I'll bet it will take me two hours to get it together!"

There came a day when the summer boarders were gone. And the house seemed very empty.

"I shall miss them dreadfully," said Mrs. Sloan as they sat out on the porch after supper. Mr. Sloan had gone to bed. "I feel as if I have had a real good visit. They were as nice people as ever lived if they were from the city."

"They weren't a bit stuck-up," declared Cy. And Margaret said thoughtfully, "I guess it's more in the people than in the place they're from, anyway. City folks are not all alike, and—I don't know that country people are."

They were silent for a while and then Dick asked:

"Well, Mag, what did it bring you all told? Have you footed it up?"

"I was just thinking about it," she said, which was the truth, but not as Dick took it. Her thoughts were of the new books she and Jeff could get from the library for their course, and those she would read to her mother when the long evenings came, and a scheme for a social club that she and Lilian had been talking over.

"There's the ice for one thing," said Cy, who was practical. "It was worth having them to find out that we can't live without ice. Pa says we'll build an ice-house this fall. Of course we can do it! Anybody can build an ice-house that can build a barn."

"And the oil stove," said Mamie, "and all the things Mag got—"

"And the house fixed up," put in Cy again. "And Mag paid the note today, so the filly's safe."

"Well, it's easily calculated," said Dick, impatient of these diversions from the main question. "They paid ten dollars a week, didn't they?"

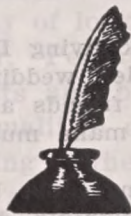
"Yes."

"And they were here just nine weeks?"

"Nine weeks."

"Well, then, it brought you just even ninety dollars."

"Yes," said Margaret slowly—but the shining look on her face was not a reflection of the gold that perisheth—"yes—it brought me just ninety dollars—in money!"



THANKSGIVING EVE.

BY J. M. COCHRAN.

Come, my dear, your good work is well done;

The hearthstone is cozy and warm.

Hear the wind at the window! It knocks

To warn of the rage of the storm.

Bring your knitting and sit you down here,

While I fill me my pipe for a smoke.

Rare old gossip of wandering years

The pipe and the needles invoke.

Hear the wind in the chimney, my dear?

Its voice in the same dulcet tone

As it sang in the night, long ago,

While we sat on your father's hearthstone?

At our school o'er your shoulder you leaned,

When you were but a bit of a chick,

Your curls brushing my cheek the glad while

Me you helped with my "arithmatic."

We quarreled but once, coming home;

We had names—you a flirt, I a fool.

The girl's nimbler tongue would not stop—

"I the love-sick green gosling of school."

Then I loved you the first, and all since;

That I vowed you, a maiden tall grown,

While the wind in the chimney sang sweet,

And we sat on your father's hearthstone.

Tomorrow comes Thanksgiving Day,

And our great golden wedding comes too.

Scattered children and friends at the feast,

And a preacher to make much ado.

So, then, if the wedding must be,

Polly-foxing the children's desire,

'Tis but meet that we quietly sit

In fine courtship, tonight, by the fire.

Thanking God for our long happy lives,

Let us wander to school, far away;

Your curls brushing my cheeks o'er the slate,

Love's problem was set on that day.

Thanking God for our children and home,

If for memory's dear sake alone,

While the wind in the chimney sings sweet,

We will sit on your father's hearthstone.

One Thanksgiving.

By HEPSY NEFF.

Forty years of married life means more today than it ever did before. Indeed, it almost seems beyond the comprehension of some people.

"To think of cooking three meals a day for forty years for a man is something appalling," said a well-dressed woman at a club gathering.

"Or forty years of sewing on buttons," said another.

"But forty years of seeing the same man across the table and hearing him find fault with your cooking is the worst," chimed in a third.

The opinion went around the table with various additions but no subtractions until a quiet little woman said distinctly and with some feeling: "To think of meeting a good man every day for forty years, is something delightful. And to think of sending a good man out every day for forty years, strong of arm and glad of heart, able to take a man's place and do a man's work in the world because of your help, is something of which any woman might well be proud."

There was a lull in the conversation for a few moments, and the subject was dismissed with, "O, to be sure, that is one way of looking at it."

One way of looking at it, indeed. It is well for humanity that there is one other way of looking at it besides the way suggested by the first speaker. Perhaps some qualities of the heart go out of fashion, like hats and bonnets—in fashionable circles. And perhaps these same qualities are as precious—and as rare—as jewels. It is all according to the way one looks at it. If tinsel is the thing it will take a great deal of it to be worth much, but if gold every grain counts.

This married life of which I speak began under difficulties. The young physician had won plenty of honor, had made his way unaided from high school to diplomas from two colleges, but in doing so had impaired his eyesight temporarily if not permanently. Friends said to the bride-to-be, "Some day he will be blind," but she only said, "Then he will need me all the more."

For forty blessed years they worked together and her eyes supplied what he lacked. Then one night in answering a night call he stooped and struck the sensitive eyeball upon the sharp post of a chair and the sight was gone forever. The other eye rapidly failed under the added strain and soon could only distinguish light from darkness.

A promising son, just entering upon manhood, had established himself in a successful business in the city and at this juncture sent for the stricken parents to come and make their home with him. The best skill to be found in the country had been sought in an effort to save some degree of sight, so that the vision and the savings of years went out together. They went to the city, but before their goods were unpacked the son sickened and died of typhoid fever. The blow left them stunned and helpless. Another son came to the rescue and took them into his home.

For a time they could only sit in hopeless sorrow, waiting for—they knew not what, and feeling that death would be a welcome relief. But time, that great healer of human hearts, at last wore away the keenness of their anguish and the old activity of mind asserted itself. The wife found plenty of occupation in the household affairs of a large and growing family, but the doctor was almost helpless. In his own home he might have learned to get around and even occupy himself with light work, but here he was always in the way. He tried to be helpful to the children, but his hands were unused to such tasks and they could not wait for him to learn. Accustomed to the most active interest in public affairs he longed to know what was going on in the great world so suddenly grown dark to him. But the willing eyes that had seen for him so long must now be given to serving others besides himself, in order to make some return for their place in the home, as well as to lessen the frowns and chilling tones which this added burden gradually brought.

Coming from a home of wealth, accustomed to the place and privileges of the wife of a successful physician, this brave woman shrank from nothing that could smooth the path which they seemed forced to tread. But her hands were never too busy to keep her mind from revolving plans to restore again their own home.

It chanced that a new schoolhouse was built adjoining a little vacant property that remained of their prosperous days. She conceived the idea of making a home and opening a school supply store there. That their little stock of funds would not cover the cost of building a house and leave the small margin undisturbed which they had set aside to meet their last needs, and which they had promised each other never to touch, did not discourage her. With woman's patience and alertness she bided her time, and when an old building was to be sold and removed she bought it and had it placed on this property. A small addition was absolutely necessary, and it was hastily put up. As soon as the plaster was dry and before the finishing was complete she gathered the furniture that had made their once happy home and had it sent out.

It was the day before Thanksgiving when they came to take possession of their new home. The house was just as the workmen had left it and their goods were put in helter-skelter, in any

way that seemed easier for those who handled them. To this house which after years of sorrow was to be home to this stricken pair, now wearing the frosts of nearly sixty years in their hair, they came on a bleak November day when the afternoon sun was low—as low as the waning tide of their own lives. They came alone, bearing between them the few things necessary for a day's meals, which the ever thoughtful wife had provided. Together they set up a small cookstove, built a fire and comforted each other with their own food at their own table. Bedding was unpacked and laid upon the floor and they slept with thankful hearts. The next day was Thanksgiving. I have had the story often from her own lips and it is sweeter than any words of mine can make it.

"I was determined that the doctor should have a glad Thanksgiving day if we never had anything else," she would say, "and I knew if he did it must be in our own home. So, bad as it was, we came. I bought a few extras for dinner and a good paper which I found at a news stand, for I knew what would make him happier than anything else. When I awoke that morning he was already up trying to build a fire just as he used to do. 'I want to light a fire, Lizzie,' he said, and he did. We were so happy. We could talk of nothing but our place and our things and I had to tell him a hundred times just how it looked—outside I mean. I knew better than to tell him how it looked inside. We ate our breakfast and washed up our few dishes and then I got out a piece of carpet and spread it over the dirty floor and we put the table on it and our chairs and, with a big fire crackling in the stove, we sat down together and I read to him until noon. O, we were so happy! He was so hungry for the news and he had waited for me to read to him so long. You see, he enjoyed it just as much as if everything was all right, and it made me happy to see him happy.

"When it came noon we had our Thanksgiving dinner. I had some fine boiled ham and a little cranberry sauce and bread and butter and tea—just the kind of tea the doctor liked, and I am sure nobody was any happier or enjoyed a Thanksgiving dinner any more than we did. And then I read again until I finished the paper, even some of the advertisements, before we did anything to the house. And we said then and we have said many times since that that was the happiest Thanksgiving day we knew."

When the story is done her eyes are always wet and shining, and looking into their depths I have never doubted the rare sweet joy of that day nor of every other day, so long as the doctor lived. And out of her little store this white-haired woman made a frugal living for ten years and was eyes to her blind husband, keeping him so well informed on current affairs that not a man of the village could discuss public questions with a keener knowledge of

every detail than he. Almost they rounded fifty full years of married life—forty-eight blessed years of a companionship of which neither ever tired. And the story of that one Thanksgiving day holds the key to all.

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He Visited His Old Home.

"Hello, Jim! Where have you been lately?" shouted a broker the other evening to a well-dressed man in the corridor of the hotel. The gentleman stopped, shook hands with his friend, and replied: "I've been home to see my old father for the first time in sixteen years; and I tell you, I wouldn't have missed that visit for all my fortune."

"Kind o' good to visit your boyhood home, eh?"

"You bet. Sit down, I was just thinking about the old folks, and feel talkative. If you have a few minutes to spare, sit down, light a cigar and listen to the story of a rich man who had almost forgotten his father and mother."

They sat down and the man told his story: "How I came to visit my home happened in a curious way. Six weeks ago I went down to Fire Island fishing. I had a lunch put up for me, and you can imagine my astonishment when I opened the hamper to find a package of crackers wrapped up in a piece of the country weekly published at my home in Wisconsin. I read every word of it, advertisements and all. There was George Kellogg, who was a schoolmate of mine, advertising hams and salt pork. Another boy was postmaster. By George! it made me homesick, and I determined then and there to go home, and go home I did.

"In the first place, I must tell you how I came to New York. I had a tiff with my father and left home. I finally turned up in New York with a dollar in my pocket. I got a job running a freight elevator in the very house in which I am now a partner. My haste to get rich drove the thought of my parents from me, and when I did think of them the hard words that my father last spoke to me rankled in my bosom. Well, I went home. I tell you, John, my train seemed to creep. I was actually worse than a schoolboy going home for vacation. At last we neared the town. Familiar sights met my eyes, and, upon my word, they filled with tears. There was Bill Lyman's red barn, just the same; but—great scott! what were all the other houses? We rode nearly a mile before we came to the station, passing many houses of which only an occasional one was familiar. The town had grown to ten times its size when I knew it. The train stopped and I jumped off. Not a face in sight that I knew, and I started down the platform to go home. In the office door stood the station agent. I walked up and said: 'Howdy, Mr. Collins?'

"He stared at me and replied: 'You've got the best of me, sir.'

"I told him who I was and what I had been doing in New

York, and he didn't make any bones in talking to me. Said he: 'It's about time you came home. You in New York rich, and your father scratching gravel to get a bare living.'

"I tell you, John, it knocked me all in a heap. I thought my father had enough to live on comfortably. Then a notion struck me. Before going home I telegraphed to Chicago to one of our correspondents there to send me \$1,000 by first mail. Then I went into Mr. Collins' back office, got my trunk in there, and put on an old hand-me-down suit that I used for fishing and hunting. My plug hat I replaced by a soft one, took my valise in my hand, and went home. Somehow the place didn't look right. The currant bushes had been dug up from the front yard, and the fence was gone. All the old locust trees had been cut down and young maple trees were planted. The home looked smaller, somehow, too. But I went up to the front door and rang the bell. Mother came to the door and said: 'We don't wish to buy anything today, sir.'

"It didn't take me a minute to survey her from head to foot. Neatly dressed, John, but a patch and a darn here and there, her hair streaked with grey, her face thin, drawn and wrinkled. Yet over her eyeglasses shone those good, honest, benevolent eyes. I stood staring at her, and then she began to stare at me. I saw the blood rush to her face, and with a great sob she threw herself upon me, and nervously clasped me around the neck, hysterically crying: 'It's Jimmy, it's Jimmy!'

"Then I cried too, John. I just broke down and cried like a baby. She got me into the house, hugging and kissing me, and then she went to the back door and shouted, 'George!'

"Father called from the kitchen, 'What do you want, Car'line!'

"Then he came in. He knew me in a moment. He stuck out his hand and grasped mine, and said sternly: 'Well, young man, do you propose to behave yourself now?'

"He tried to put up a brave front, but he broke down. There we three sat like whipped school children, all whimpering. At last supper time came and mother went out to prepare it. I went into the kitchen with her.

"'Where do you live, Jimmy?' she asked.

"'In New York,' I replied.

"'What are you workin' at now, Jimmy?'

"'I'm workin' in a drygoods store.'

"'Then I suppose you don't live very high, for I hear tell o' them city clerks what don't get enough money to keep body and soul together. So I'll just tell you, Jimmy, we've got nothin' but roast spareribs for supper. We ain't got any money now, Jimmy. We're poorer 'n Job's turkey.'

"I told her I would be delighted with the spareribs, and to tell the truth, John, I haven't eaten a meal in New York that tasted as good as those roasted spareribs did. I spent the evening

playing checkers with father, while mother sat by telling me all about their misfortunes, from old white mooley getting drowned in the pond to father's signing a note for a friend and having to mortgage the place to pay for it.

"The mortgage was due inside of a week and not a cent to meet it with—just \$800. She supposed they would be turned out of house and home, but in my mind I supposed they wouldn't. At last nine o'clock came and father said: 'Jim, go out to the barn and see if Kit is all right. Bring in an armful of old shingles that are just inside the door and fill up the water pail. Then we'll go off to bed and get up early and go a-fishin.'

"I didn't say a word, but went out to the barn, bedded down the horse, broke up an armful of shingles, pumped up a pail of water, filled the wood-box, and then we all went to bed.

"Father called me at 4:30 in the morning, and while he was getting a cup of coffee I skipped over to the depot crosslots and got my best brass rod. Father took nothing but a trolling line and a spoon hook. He rowed the boat with the trolling line in his mouth, while I stood in the stern with a silver shiner rigged on. Now, John, I never saw a man catch fish as he did. To make a long story short, he caught four bass and five pickerel, and I never got a bite.

"At noon we went ashore and father went home, while I went to the postoffice. I got a letter from Chicago with a check for \$1,000 in it. With some trouble I got it cashed, getting paid in \$5 and \$10 bills, making quite a roll. I then got a roast of beef and a lot of delicacies, and then went home. After that I went visiting among my old schoolmates for two hours and went home. The joint was in the oven. Mother had put on her only silk dress and father had donned Sunday go-to-meeting clothes, none too good, either. This is where I played a joke on the old folks. Mother was in the kitchen watching the roast. Father was out to the barn, and I had a clear coast. I dumped the sugar out of the old blue bowl, put the thousand dollars in it and placed the cover on again. At last supper was ready. Father asked a blessing over it, and he actually trembled when he stuck his knife into the roast.

"'We haven't had a piece of meat like this in five years, Jim,' he said, and mother put in with, 'And we haven't had any coffee in a year, only when we went a-visitin'.'

"Then she poured out the coffee and lifted the cover of the sugar bowl, asking as she did so, 'How many spoonfuls, Jimmy?'

"Then she struck something that wasn't sugar. She picked up the bowl and peered into it. 'Aha, Master Jimmy, playin' your old tricks on your mammy, eh? Well, boys will be boys.'

"Then she grasped for breath. She saw it was money. She

looked at me, then at father, and then with trembling fingers drew the great roll of bills out.

"Ha! ha! ha! I can see father now as he stood there on tiptoe, with his knife in one hand, fork in the other, and his eyes fairly bulging out of his head. But it was too much for mother. She raised her eyes to heaven and said slowly, 'Put your trust in the Lord, for he will provide.'

"Then she fainted away. Well, John, there's not much more to tell. We threw water in her face and brought her to, and we demolished that dinner, mother all the time saying, 'My boy Jimmy! My boy Jimmy!'

"I stayed home a month. I fixed up the place, paid off all the debts, had a good time and came back to New York. I am going to send \$50 home every week. I tell you, John, it's mighty nice to have a home."

John was looking steadily at the head of his cane. When he spoke he took Jim by the hand and said: "Jim, what you have told me has affected me greatly. I haven't heard from my home way up in Maine for ten years. I am going home tomorrow."



A Night in a Log.

By Lewis B. Miller.

CHAPTER 1.

Scared into the Log.

In the fall of 1878 a man named Treadwell, living in eastern Texas, sold his farm, bought cattle with the money received for it, and with his family started out to find a country better adapted to stock-raising. He himself drove the wagon and led the way, while the cattle were looked after by his boys, Dick and Martin, and a hired man. Dick was sixteen, Martin being only about eleven. On the morning of the fourth day, after the cattle had been broken to drive, the man turned back, leaving the boys to do all the driving.

The covered wagon, followed by the grazing drove and the two boys on ponyback, traveled slowly toward the sunset for three or four weeks. At length the party found themselves far out in northwest Texas, almost beyond the settlements, and well up toward the region of the state known as the Panhandle. Here one night they camped in the valley of a prairie creek, near where a lone settler was living.

This man, whose name proved to be Parks, had settled here the spring before on a section of school land. He and his family were nearly dying of loneliness and could not do enough for the Treadwells, so eager were they for neighbors. The result of their overtures and persuasions was that the new-comers settled on another section of school land, a little farther up the creek.

The Parks family was living in a dugout, an excavation made in a hillside and covered with logs and earth. Treadwell and his boys made a similar dugout, to be used for a kitchen. For a living-room they decided to build a house which would stand but a few feet in front of their dugout.

There was a strip of timber along the creek banks from a hundred yards to three-quarters of a mile wide, and consisting mostly of hackberries, elms, cottonwoods and sycamores, undergrown in many places with thickets. Here Mr. Treadwell and Dick cut logs for the walls of their house. But instead of making the roof of boards or shingles, which would have had to be hauled a long distance, they covered the house with logs laid flat and a mound of earth on top of them, the mound being made steep enough to shed the water. This was the way most houses were covered out here.

"That beats a shingle-roof badly enough," Mr. Treadwell

remarked, after the last boxful of earth had been carried up, poured out and tramped down. All the family were standing off inspecting and commenting upon their new place of abode.

"I'd like to know why you think so," spoke up his wife.

"Why, don't you see?" he answered, laughing. "This will not only turn the rain, but it's heavy. A wind storm, if one comes along, will find the cabin weighted down. These logs are a little light anyway."

Following the example of their neighbors the Treadwells put in a farm of several acres in the creek valley. It was enclosed by a "shanghai" fence, made of posts, poles, brush and one barbed wire. The millet sowed did fairly well, though in the absence of a reaping machine it had to be cut with a cradle. But the dry weather came so early this year that all that they got from their corn was a few messes of roasting-ears and some fodder. The grass was pretty good, however, and as their cattle increased in numbers and fatness neither they nor the Parks, who also had cattle, were seriously concerned about the crop-failure.

The county was still unorganized. That is there was no county-seat; nor were there any county officers to enforce the laws. The nearest postoffice was two days' travel distant. The only representatives of governmental authority out here were the Rangers—mounted State troops employed chiefly in guarding the frontier. Squads of these patrolled the country more or less regularly, to see that no lawlessness was going on. Besides the Rangers and the family down the creek the Treadwells saw nobody except a few cowboys from the widely scattered ranches.

But the oldest of the Parks children was only about a year younger than Dick Treadwell, and the two soon became close friends. They looked much alike, both being tall for their ages, slim, and when on the ground rather awkward-looking. They appeared more at home in their saddles. The taking care of the cattle was left wholly to them, and they were much together, riding up and down the creeks or across the great prairies in search of animals that had gone astray.

When not busy with the cattle they sometimes went hunting. There were several kinds of game in the country, particularly antelopes on the prairies and wild turkeys in the woods along the streams. On one of these little hunting trips about fifteen months after the Treadwell family had arrived here the two boys had an experience that was as unusual as it was exciting and dangerous.

The day was a warm and sunshiny one in January. Bud came by for Dick not long after dinner, and the two started off up the creek on foot, Dick carrying a Winchester and Bud a double-barrel shot-gun. The dogs wanted to follow, but were scolded back, as they would be likely to scare away the game.

"I don't just like this weather," Dick remarked, as he carefully observed the northern horizon. "Can't see any signs of a norther yet, but guess it's not far off. These fine days are weather-breeders this time of year."

"Oh, well, if a norther wants to come let it come," replied Bud, carelessly. "The colder the weather turns the better; our meat won't spoil."

Both laughed at this joke. For though they had hunted not a little their success, at least with the larger game, had never been anything to boast of.

Not until they had gone three or four miles up the valley did the boys see the first animal they cared to shoot at—a small herd of antelopes. But the antelopes were a good way off, and when first seen were running as fast as they could. After watching them till they had disappeared over the rise in the prairie the hunters went on.

A mile or two farther up the creek they came upon another herd. Concealing themselves behind some bushes they tied their handkerchiefs on sticks and waved them aloft. But unlike most of their kind, these antelopes seemed to have no curiosity; for instead of returning they fled to the high prairie without looking back. Again the disappointed hunters went on.

"Look yonder, Dick! Who are they, do you think you know?" asked Bud, not long afterward, as he pointed to a party of twenty or twenty-five mounted men coming down the valley at a trot.

Dick looked at them in surprise. "They must be Rangers," he declared. "Unusually big party of 'em, too. Wonder what's up."

When the hunters and the Rangers met the Rangers drew up their horses, and one of them inquired if the boys had met or seen any mounted men. On being told that they had seen no one the Ranger explained that he and those with him were in pursuit of a gang of robbers. This gang, he informed them, numbered about a dozen, and was under the leadership of a notorious desperado. After robbing stores and banks and railroad trains, committing several murders while doing so, the gang had been so hard-pressed that they made for the unsettled country. When last seen they were coming in this direction, but the pursuing party had lost the trail.

"We're going down the creek a few miles," the Ranger went on, "then we'll take across the country to the next creek north, and follow up that. There's a big reward out for several of the gang. If you happen to see them or hear of them get word to us as soon as you can, and you'll come in for a share of whatever we receive."

Dick and Bud assured them that they would do all they could to aid in capturing the robbers. Then, with the jangle of many

spurs, the party rode on at a fast gait. As they were going, one of those in the rear turned in his saddle and called back:

"Better look out for them fellers! They're a hard lot—just as soon kill you as look at you!"

"Hope we won't run across any of 'em," said Bud, a little anxiously, with a glance towards the woods.

"No danger of that," Dick reassured him. "If they were along here the Rangers would have found 'em. But I guess we had better turn back; it's getting late."

They started for home, but were so busy discussing the news just received that they failed to notice the weather until nearly half the sky was black with clouds sweeping over it from the north.

"There comes the norther!" exclaimed Bud. "Now we'll have to strike a trot to keep from freezing."

A few minutes later the sun, which was not very high by this time, ceased to shine; and almost at the same instant an icy blast came shrieking down from the high prairie. The boys buttoned up their coats hastily and shiveringly, turned up their coat-collars and plunged into the woods for shelter. The wind did not blow so much here, but the mild, spring-like air was fast becoming raw and wintry.

Keeping near the creek the two hurried on, picking their way among the trees and bushes. When they had gone a mile or so they came to where the strip of woods widened out, the timber being also larger and denser. Here the wind could scarcely be felt at all, though they heard it roaring loudly among the tree-tops overhead.

"Hello! that must be our big sycamore," exclaimed Dick, as they came upon a huge fallen tree.

"That's just what it is," Bud declared. "I wondered what had become of it."

The last time they had seen this tree, some months before, it was standing, but a wind storm had since pushed it down, breaking it off even with the ground. It was by far the largest tree they had seen out here, the trunk being about four feet in diameter at the thickest part. Before its overthrow this sycamore had been a sort of a landmark, for its tops rose above all the other trees and could be seen from miles away on the prairie. When standing the trunk had appeared solid, but now it was seen to be little more than a shell, the hollow in it being nearly a yard in diameter at the open end.

The boys stopped and walked around the fallen giant, examining it, and particularly the hollow in it, with a good deal of interest.

"Some animal must have had its den in there," Bud remarked as he stood before the opening. "Here's almost a path leading in."

"Rabbits, I guess," replied Dick. "This is a good shelter for 'em in bad weather."

Bud squatted down and looked as far as he could into the hollow. "There may be a 'coon or a wildcat in there," he said. "If I had a wad of grass I'd light it and throw it in, and see what I could see. I believe—what was that? It sounded like somebody talking."

Both listened intently for several moments. "That's what it is," replied Dick, as he stood up and looked over the log, in the direction the sound came from. "It's a lot of men on horseback," he added. "I can just get glimpses of 'em through the bushes. They're coming this way, too. They're going to cross the creek. They've got guns. I can see—" He dropped down suddenly behind the end of the log.

"What's the matter, Dick? Don't you suppose they're the Rangers we just saw?"

"No, they're not," Dick replied, lowering his voice. "Different crowd altogether. Good deal more likely to be the fellows the Rangers are looking for."

Bud turned pale. "Mercy! I don't want to fall in with that gang!" he declared in cautious but agitated tones.

"Neither do I. Wish we hadn't stopped here. If we'd—" Dick had been rising up till he could peep over the log, but he hastily dodged down again. "They're coming up the creek bank," he whispered. "They'll be here in a minute now!" He was as pale as Bud.

"Let's crawl in here and hide till they get by, Dick."

"All right, in we go—quick! Be careful with your gun."

Bud dived into the hollow log on his hands and knees, Dick diving in after him. When they had crawled several feet they turned themselves partly, so they could look out, then lay still and waited.

"It may be only a gang of cowboys," whispered Dick; "but this beats taking any risk. They look to me like a hard crowd, though. All the money in the country wouldn't hire me to fall into their hands without knowing who they are."

"Nor me," was Bud's whispered reply. "Here they come!"

The tramping of horses was now heard, and the gruff voices of men in conversation. One of the party stopped near the open end of the log. Dick and Bud could see his feet in the stirrups and part of one leg, also the end of a Winchester scabbard protruding from under the fender.

"Boys," the fellow called out to his companions, in a by no means pleasant voice, "what do you say to this here for a campin' place? Tonight's goin' to be a whizzer, I guess, and we'll have hard work to sleep warm. Plenty of wood close about; we can build a rousin' fire ag'inst the sheltered side of this here big log."

There's water near by, too, and grass not far off. And if that pack of Rangers runs onto us this is about as good a place to fight it out as we can find. I think we'd better stop right here."

"Do you hear that, Dick?" whispered Bud, with a shiver, which was partly from cold but more from fear. The man's allusion to the Rangers left no doubt that he and those with him were the gang of robbers.

"Yes, listen! Let's hear what they're going to do."

The other members of the gang promptly endorsed the suggestion of the one who had spoken—he was their leader—and it at once became evident that they were going to camp here for the night.

CHAPTER II.

Smoked Out of the Log.

"Dick, this is terrible!" whispered Bud. "What on earth can we do?"

"Don't see that we can do anything but keep still and wait till they go away. But we'd better crawl in farther—just as far as we can. Some of 'em may look in here, and they might see us. Don't make a noise, whatever you do."

Bud moved along pushing his gun before him, and kept crawling till the hollow became too small for him to go farther. Dick crowded up against Bud's feet. Then they lay still again, and waited and listened.

Now they could hear the men dropping their saddles to the ground. Later a jarring of the log told them that wood was being piled against it, in readiness for making a fire. The robbers kept rather quiet, probably from caution. But before long several of them began to complain of the cold, and to insist that a fire be kindled at once. Then the voice of their leader was heard to say:

"We're not goin' to kindle any fire till it gits too dark for the smoke to be seen. Them Rangers may be camped in half a mile of here for all we know. If you fellows are freezin', I'll give you somethin' to warm you up." And he proceeded to send them out as scouts in different directions. Finally he ordered one of them to climb the tallest tree he could find and look for smoke from the Rangers' camp-fire. The men obeyed grumblingly, and some of them could be heard cursing the Rangers till out of hearing.

The three or four who had not gone scouting stamped their feet and walked round and round to keep warm. Two of them climbed upon the log, where they chased each other back and forth. They still had their spurs on, and made a great deal of noise. At length Dick, whose face was turned so that he could look out, saw one jump down at the end of the log.

"Say, boys!" the man called out, as he stooped over and looked into the hollow. At these words Bud and Dick started violently, thinking themselves discovered, and were nearly frightened out of their senses. Great was their relief when the man added, his words showing that he was speaking to his companions, "If it goes to rain tonight we'll crawl in here and sleep. Mighty good place to keep dry."

"Mighty good place to hide, too, if the Rangers was to swoop down on us," remarked the other man, who had also jumped to the ground.

"The best place to hide is the worst place to hide when somebody's looking for you," replied the first man. "You don't ketch me pokin' my head into no such a trap as that."

This talk of the robbers about using the log for a sleeping-place or a hiding-place was, to the two boys, only less alarming than actual discovery. Bud, in his excitement, tried to crawl farther in and in so doing rubbed against the rough wood, making a slight noise. Dick gripped his friend's leg, half angrily. He was more than half scared.

"Did you hear that?" asked one of the robbers. "There's some wild varmint in there. If I can see its eyes I'll shoot it."

Dick had turned his head when the men first looked into the log, lest his face should be seen. Now he stole one hasty, terrified glance and saw the robber squatting at the open end of the log with a six-shooter in his hand, while he tried to peer into the darkness.

"Tell 'im not to shoot, Dick! He'll kill us!" whispered Bud, in much agitation.

Dick, too, not knowing that the man probably could not see two yards into the hollow, quickly decided that it would be safer to throw themselves upon the mercy of the robbers, and was about to call out when he heard the voice of their leader swearing loudly and angrily.

"Did anybody ever see a pair of fools?" the robber exclaimed in a tone of strong disgust. "Here now, we may be in a rifle shot of fifty or seventy-five Rangers, and yet these fellers are goin' to shoot a 'possum!" Then he added, even more sarcastically: "I don't see how your daddies and mammies ever raised two such smart chaps as you air. You must be hungry for lead, or eechin' to have your necks stretched."

The man with the six-shooter got up and swore, with a great deal of bluster and bravado, that he wasn't "afeared of a forty-acre field of Rangers." But he and the other man went away from the end of the log and did not come back. It was a good while before the boys recovered from the excitement of their supposed narrow escape.

Soon the robber who had climbed a tree was heard calling

down, from a distance, that he could not discover any smoke or any other sign of a camp. Then the scouts came in, one at a time, and reported that they had explored the woods for a mile or two up the creek, and had seen neither Rangers nor anybody else. The robbers were evidently relieved at this, for they talked louder and laughed more heartily.

One or two of the scouts reported having seen cattle, which the norther had driven into the woods for shelter, and a small party was now sent out to kill a beef. A little later the faint report of a gun was heard by Dick and Bud. It was nearly dark by this time, and a crackling sound, soon followed by a light shining against two or three tree-trunks that the boys could see, told that the robbers had kindled the fire.

When the foragers had returned with the beef the men fell to broiling it and eating their suppers. It appeared from their conversation that they had only the beef to eat, but were hungry enough to be glad to get that. While eating they talked of the robberies and other crimes they had committed, and also of their fights with sheriffs' posses and the Rangers. Later they discussed some other robberies that they were planning.

The gang spent an hour or two cooking and eating, but soon afterward began to talk of sleeping. In a little while they became quiet.

Now only the roaring and crackling of their camp-fire could be heard, mingled with the sound of the wind among the tree-tops. The night was intensely cold, and as the hours dragged by the two boys in the log grew numb and wretched. It must have been about midnight when Bud said:

"Dick, I believe I'll freeze before morning. My hands haven't any feeling in 'em, and my feet are just like chunks of ice in my boots. It must be a terrible night."

"It is. I'm nearly froze too—all except my feet. They're not so very cold. I'll tell you: The log must be warm where the fire is burning against it. Let's crawl back a little piece and see. Leave the guns here."

On moving a few feet toward the open end, they found the south side and bottom of the log delightfully warm. Stretching themselves at full length here, for there was room enough for both, they lay absorbing the heat into their numb, half-frozen bodies. In a little while they were fairly comfortable, and wondered why they had not thought of this sooner.

"What do you s'pose that gang would do with us if they found us in here?" asked Bud, in cautious tones, as the two lay with their heads close together.

"Shoot us like dogs, I guess. They'd think we were spying on 'em, and wouldn't listen to any explanation. Didn't you hear of how they spoke of shootin' that railroad engineer that didn't

obey their orders quick enough? They're cold-blooded scoundrels. Every mother's son of 'em deserves half a dozen hangings. At any rate, it's not worth while for us to take any risk. They'll be gone by daylight or a little after, I guess. Then we'll have nothing to do but to crawl out and go on home."

"I'd rather stay in here a solid month than fall into their hands," said Bud.

The two boys lay whispering together for some time, then remained silent. When at length Dick spoke again, Bud did not answer, and was found to be asleep. Dick kept awake for a good while longer, then he too laid his head on his arm and slept.

He dreamed he was lying on a burning bedstead, and awoke to find that the wood under him had grown hot. One hand, which had been against it, was nearly blistered. He had trouble in breathing, too, for the air was mixed with smoke. Up in the side of the log his eyes detected a small glowing spot.

"Bud! Bud! wake up!" he whispered, shaking the sleeper vigorously. "Wake up! We've got to get out of here! The log's burning through."

Bud roused himself. "We'll have to slip out of here and get away."

"Can we do that? Won't they see us and shoot us?"

"Better shot than burnt or strangled to death. We've got to go, risk or no risk. I can hardly breathe now for the smoke, and it's getting worse fast. But I think we can steal away without being seen. Wait here a minute."

He crawled to the open end of the log, and cautiously put his head out till he could see the brightly lighted space in front of the camp-fire. A number of forms, rolled in blankets, lay in a semicircle around the fire. Only one man was sitting up. He had his back against a tree, his gun between his knees, and his hands locked around them, while his head leaned forward till his chin rested on his breast.

Dick's eyes took in this scene at a glance, and he understood the situation. Hastily crawling back, he and Bud whispered together for a few moments, then they got their guns and hats and began to work their way out.

At the end of the log they stopped to breathe the fresh air and listen. Hearing nothing to alarm them, Dick took another peep at the dozing guard. The way was clear, and they crept out, Dick in the lead, Bud close behind.

Keeping in the shadow, they crawled around till the big log was between them and the sleeping gang of robbers.

They knew well enough that their lives were now at stake, and so cautiously did they move and lift their guns that not a twig broke and scarcely a leaf rustled under them. Fortunately

the wind was still howling and roaring overhead, and no ordinary noise was likely to arouse the guard.

They had crawled twenty-five or thirty yards, and were beginning to feel that safety was near, when they were startled and alarmed by the loud snorting of a horse near by. Instantly both flattened themselves against the ground. Dick had his face toward the log, and saw the guard's head and shoulders rise above it suddenly. The man stood looking and listening for a minute or two, and then walked around the end of the log and came toward the horse, which was lariatd to a tree.

The boys now regretted that they had not sprung up at the first alarm and made a dash for the woods and darkness. But it was too late for that. They could only trust to the shadow of the log, in which they lay, to conceal them.

The guard, carrying his gun in readiness to shoot, passed within a few yards of them and stopped by the horse. He remained there several minutes, trying to discover what the animal was alarmed at. But seeing and hearing nothing, he gave an audible shiver at the cold and hurried back to the fire. After standing before it for a little while to warm himself, he sat down again.

At this Dick and Bud, much relieved, once more began to crawl away. They turned from the horse, and moved even more cautiously than before. Inch by inch they crept along. Not until they had gone a full hundred yards, and were out of the light and nearly out of sight of the camp-fire, did they venture to get from their hands and knees and walk. Even then they went cautiously, and spoke only in whispers till they had gone half a mile farther.

"I'll tell you that was a close call, wasn't it?" Bud remarked, still in guarded tones, as the two hurried along as fast as they could make their way among the bushes.

"Yes, it was," replied Dick, who was still in the lead. "I never was so glad to get clear of any place in my life." And the gait at which they traveled proved the sincerity of what he said.

The sky was cloudless and the air raw. Now that they felt themselves safe, the boys became aware for the first time that they were almost frozen. They had trouble in finding their way through the woods, frequently stumbling over logs and getting tangled among the vines and briars.

But before they had gone far day began to dawn, and there was soon light enough. Now they warmed themselves by striking a fox-trot and keeping it up till they reached Dick's home.

It was not unusual for Bud and Dick to spend a night one with the other. So it happened that no alarm had been felt on account of their absence, Bud being thought to have stayed with Dick and Dick to have stayed with Bud. Not for a moment had any of their friends suspected the trying and dangerous situation in which the two had passed so many long hours.

After warming himself Bud hurried on home. But scarcely half an hour had gone when he came back, riding his pony this time, and accompanied by the squad of Rangers he and Dick had seen the day before. The Rangers had spent the night not far from where the Parkses lived. On learning this Bud hurried to their camp and related his experience with the robbers. At the Rangers' request he returned with them to guide them.

Dick saddled his pony and joined the crowd. They all rode rapidly till they were near the robbers' camp, then advanced with more caution.

They found the big log, with the camp-fire still burning against it. But the robber-gang had disappeared. The sun was now well up, and they doubtless had been gone an hour or two.

Their trail leading up the creek through the woods was soon found, and the Rangers started in swift pursuit, declaring that they would overhaul the gang before they had gone many miles. Bud and Dick, having done all they had agreed to do, did not care to go farther.

As was afterwards learned the robbers succeeded in giving their pursuers the slip and made good their escape for a time. The Rangers kept after them, however, and when they did overtake them there was a fight in which nearly all of the robber-gang were either killed or wounded, but two or three getting away. Not one of them surrendered while he was able to shoot.

Before returning home, after the Rangers had gone, Dick and Bud dismounted, hitched their ponies to trees and stood by the robbers' camp-fire to warm themselves. The big log was burning fiercely now, both inside and out.

"Dick, it was lucky for us that we got cold, or the fire might have penned us up in there."

"Yes, we had a narrow escape. And the robbers had one too," Dick added, with a smile. "If we'd just thought of it we might have covered them with our guns while they were all asleep here, and made the whole gang prisoners."

"What a pity that we had so much on our minds that we didn't think of that," laughed Bud. "Then we'd have got all the big rewards offered for 'em. S'pose they'll never know what a narrow escape they had."

He carried no gun inside, then ambled away, and the disheartened traveler went into the dreary, dim little waiting-room and sat down. As the day was mild there was no fire in the slaty stove. The monotonous click of the telegraph on the other side of a partition was the only sound to be heard.

A quarter of an hour passed, the young woman in gray growing more uneasy every moment.

"It will be dark before we get there," she thought. "O, what

CHRISTMAS EVE.

BY J. M. COCHRAN.

Long we sat by the log's fading glow,
While we spoke of the years that had fled
Since, as children, we romped in the snow,
And the white Christmas Day we were wed.
And we spoke of our four in the fold,
In sweet dreams of the glad morning's bliss;
And of one little grave in the cold,
And our first Christmas blessing to miss.

The night wind in the chimney sang soft,
The tall clock on the stairway beat time.
Through the dark from the belfry aloft
On white wings came a silvery chime.

Then my love put a candle alight;
Whilst I pondered, she silently drew
From their hiding the stockings filled tight,
One for each, Rob, Grace, Douglas and Sue.
On the mantel's edge ranged she the four,
Where the lost one's should be left a space,
Which she filled from a mother's full store,
As she pressed a soft kiss on the place.

And she said with a sorrowful sigh,
In the words that were tearful and low:
"When good Santa the churchyard comes by,
He will leave Walter's gifts on the snow."

In long thought of her lost little lad,
To the mantel her head bowed in prayer;
In the chimney the wind's song was sad,
Sad the beat of the clock on the stair.

The Right Mr. Brown.

By C. A. Parker.

Late in the afternoon of a certain twenty-fourth of December, a young woman in a gray traveling suit stood upon the platform of a little country station, a look of anxiety shading her comely face, while the train that had brought and left her there thundered off and away.

On each side of the track were a few scattered buildings, the only visible sign of a town.

"Mabel always said Milton wasn't much of a place but I supposed it was more than this," said the traveler to herself. "How strange that she isn't here! What am I going to do if no one comes?"

She waited about ten minutes. By this time the only person in sight was a lank youth in blue jeans who leaned against the station building and spat meditatively every few moments, regarding the young woman meanwhile with an impassive air.

She went up to him.

"Do you know of any one by the name of Brown living about four miles from here—Mr. Edward Brown?"

The youth spat again, shifted his quid and replied:

"Uh huh."

"Well, can you tell me any way by which I can go to his place this afternoon? They were to have met me, but something seems to have prevented."

A moment's meditation and the boy responded:

"I dunno any way 'nless I was to hitch up 'n' take ye. I'll do it fer—" he paused and looked her over as if to take her measure financially. Her dress was very plain and so was her hat.

"I'll take ye fer a dollar—'n' fifty cents." The last was added uncertainly.

"Very well. I am willing to pay what it is worth. Can we go at once? It is getting late."

"We kin start jest as soon's I kin hitch up. You better go in the waitin'-room an' set down. I'll be back in a few minutes."

He carried her grip inside, then ambled away, and the disheartened traveler went into the dreary, dim little waiting-room and sat down. As the day was mild there was no fire in the dingy stove. The monotonous click of the telegraph on the other side of a partition was the only sound to be heard.

A quarter of an hour passed, the young woman in gray growing more uneasy every moment.

"It will be dark before we get there," she thought. "O, what

can be the reason Mabel didn't meet me? If she would only come yet before we start! I wonder what sort of a rig that interesting youth could furnish."

Uncertainty on this point was finally dispelled. After ten minutes more waiting, which seemed to her interminable, and when she had about decided that the boy was not coming back at all, a loud rattling outside followed by a lusty "Whoa!" sent her quickly to the door.

An ancient two-seated vehicle and a horse apparently still more venerable were drawn up to the platform. He of the blue jeans, now enveloped in a coat that reached his heels, smiled at her expectantly from the front seat. Evidently her carriage was in waiting.

"Git right in," he called, as he clambered down, "while I fetch yer carpet bag."

She hesitated, then, as there seemed to be no alternative, climbed into the back of the "democrat" and after a rueful survey of the dusty, uncushioned seat sat down with strong inward protest; in a few moments more the outfit clattered away.

Under the influence of the prospective dollar and a half the driver's tongue was loosened and he essayed for a time to make himself agreeable. But the noise of the vehicle discouraged these attempts and he lapsed into silence.

Twilight deepened into darkness and it seemed to the weary young woman on the back seat that they must have gone twice four miles when the driver turned around and shouted:

"There 'tis! There's where Ed Brown lives! Way back behind them big trees."

Five minutes more clattering and he stopped at the gate. His passenger descended, brushed as much of the dust from the back of her skirt as the circumstances allowed, and followed youth and satchel up a walk through well-kept grounds to the house—a handsome one in modern style and quite different from what she had expected to see.

She paid the driver—who hurried off as if afraid she might demand her money back—and rang the bell. It was answered by a fine-looking young man, Mabel's affianced she supposed. But he greeted her with a courteous "Good evening," and an inquiring look at the grip on the door-step, and when she said "I am Miss Sidney," the name appeared to convey no idea to his intelligence.

"Yes, will you come in?" he said politely; looked at the satchel again, hesitated, then picked it up and carried it into the hall, Janet meekly following. Embarrassed and disheartened she took the offered chair and stammeringly inquired if Miss Brown was in.

A peculiar expression crossed the young man's face.

"She is in; I will speak to her," he said.

A few moments of bewildered waiting, then a stately, gracious woman in a black silk gown came into the hall.

She also greeted the caller with a pleasant "Good evening," then waited to know her errand.

"You are Mrs. Brown, I suppose?" said the visitor awkwardly. "I am Janet Sidney," forgetting in her confusion that she had already been announced.

"Pardon me," Mrs. Brown rejoined, smiling genially, "but I do not recall the name at this moment."

The color surged painfully over Janet's face, and it was only by a mighty effort that she forced back the tears.

"Why—Mabel invited me to spend the holidays with her," she said. "Surely you must have known."

"Mabel?" the lady of the house repeated inquiringly. "There is no Mabel in our family."

"But—then you are not Mrs. Edward Brown?"

"I am Mrs. Curtis Brown. I have a son Edward, the young man whom you saw just now. But as I said, there is no Mabel here. There seems to be some mistake, but do not be distressed, Miss Sidney. It can soon be straightened out, of course."

"You are sure it was at East Milton you wished to stop, I suppose?"

"East Milton! Why no, it was not. Is that the name of your station? The 'East' escaped me entirely. What a stupid blunder! Well, there seems nothing to be done but to throw myself on your mercy until I can go to the right Mr. Brown's."

"You are welcome to do so," Mrs. Curtis Brown answered with a reassuring smile; "and we will treat you as mercifully as we can. Now, I will show you to a room where you can brush up a little before supper, if you like. It will be ready in a few minutes."

"But it is Christmas eve; I shall intrude. I am not hungry—"

"You will not intrude in the least," Mrs. Brown interrupted. "We shall be happy to have you take supper with us. The children will be delighted; they are always glad of a visitor."

So it came to pass that Janet found herself, a little later, seated at the hospitable board of Mr. Curtis Brown, a genial old gentleman who, it transpired, was somewhat acquainted with the Mr. Edward Brown of whose home she had been in quest.

"A fine man; a very fine man indeed," he said.

"I am glad to hear you say so. It is sort of a voucher for my respectability," laughed Janet. Under the influence of her cordial reception her embarrassment had vanished and she was soon giving a piquant account of her trip from the station.

"That must have been Joe Wilson," said the younger Mr. Brown. "The scamp! He knew well enough where you could get a comfortable rig. You'd better have spoken to the station agent,

Miss Sidney. He would have found you a decent conveyance."

"O I didn't think of that. I spoke to the only person visible at that time. It was all such a stupid performance."

"If I had found the agent I shouldn't be here," she added. "My mistake would have been discovered."

"Maybe not," giggled twelve-year-old Ralph. "If you'd told him you wanted to go to Edward Brown's, he'd have thought you was Ed's girl, come to spend Christmas with him."

"Ralph!" exclaimed his mother reprovingly.

Janet blushed, but she laughed and the rest followed her example.

"And now," she said, "the question is how am I to get to the right Mr. Brown's? Is there a train in the morning?"

"No; not until noon," replied her host.

"That would take me to Milton—without the 'East'—in time to reach my friend's home before dinner. But how am I to go to the station? There is no stage, I suppose? If my charioteer of this evening knew that I wanted to go back tomorrow he would be on hand, I am positive, with his venerable horse and wagon. But he doesn't know."

Mr. Curtis Brown started to speak, but his elder son forestalled him.

"I have a conveyance which may be a trifle easier than his, rather more speedy and fully as safe. Allow me to offer that and my humble services as driver, Miss Sidney, in the absence of the crafty Joe."

"Thank you, Mr. Brown. I accept the offer with gratitude and regret. It is a shame to take such a slice out of your Christmas. And I wonder what the other Browns think of me! They'll go to the station again tomorrow, I dare say, though it isn't necessary. I've proved my ability to find ways of traveling."

"You'd better stay here to Christmas dinner," suggested Ralph, who was greatly charmed with the unexpected visitor.

"Yes, please do, Miss Sidney," begged fifteen-year-old Edith, who was no whit behind Ralph in his admiration.

"I wish you could stay, Miss Sidney," said Mrs. Brown heartily. "Don't you think you might? We shall all of us be so glad to have you, and then you could go to your friend's for the rest of the holidays. We have rural free delivery, and a letter would reach them before they left tomorrow for the station."

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate the invitation, Mrs. Brown," Janet answered with feeling. "I should be very happy to spend Christmas with you, if you really wish it, but hardly think I ought to do so, though I regret obliging Mr. Brown to drive me to the station on his holiday."

"Don't worry about him, Miss Sidney," said Mr. Brown, senior. "That doesn't trouble him—not in the least." Then asking to

be excused, the old gentleman rose and went out into the hall from whence there came a ringing sound, then his voice as if in a conversation.

"Why—the telephone!" exclaimed Janet.

"O, yes," Mrs. Brown said with a smile. "We are connected with Milton proper; if your friends have a telephone too they will soon know that you are safe, and you can know whether they want you badly enough to come for you tomorrow, or whether they will let you stay with us."

Mr. Brown now appeared in the doorway. "Come, Miss Sidney," he said; "you'd better conduct this conversation. Shut the doors behind you and it can be strictly private."

Janet hastened out into the hall. In a few moments she returned with her report.

"Mabel says I must come tomorrow without fail. They can meet me as well as not. And she was so delighted to hear about me. Blessed be telephones!"

Ralph looked glum.

"You might stay just as well as not," he grumbled.

A tidy maid now appeared to remove the supper things and Edward Brown brought from the shed a great armful of evergreens with scarlet berries gleaming among them.

"You are just in time to help us with our decorating, Miss Sidney," he said. "We intended to do it earlier in the day but were busy with other things. Now I am glad I waited till this evening. We shall have the benefit of your taste and assistance."

"My taste?" laughed Janet. "That is a matter of conjecture with you. But I shall be a willing assistant. I enjoy such work ever so much. I'm glad, too, that you waited for me."

There was a merry evening, in which the visitor proved beyond question both her taste and ability as a decorator. The compliments which she received from young and old were many and flattering—quite enough to turn her head, she declared.

Ralph's praises were the loudest and interspersed with these were lamentations that she was not going to spend Christmas with them.

"It's getting colder," Mr. Curtis Brown announced after an inspection of the weather. "And it looks as if the storm predicted by the daily paper might be on its way."

"The daily?" said Janet in a puzzled tone.

"O yes, we have a daily. The rural free delivery brings it, you know."

"Why, of course! What a different thing country life with the modern improvements is from that with which I have had an acquaintance before."

Janet lay awake a long time that night, listening to the wind and thinking. She felt strongly the strangeness of the situation,

but mingled with this were very pleasant sensations. She had a comfortable assurance of being with real friends although so very recent. How kind they were, and how truly they seemed to enjoy having her in their home!

She believed on the whole that she would prefer to spend her Christmas here, rather than at the other Mr. Brown's. Mabel wanted her, of course, but she would have her lover and he would naturally claim a large share of her friend's attentions.

She fell asleep at length, waking only with the dawn of Christmas morning.

When she arose and looked out of the window, she uttered an exclamation of astonishment. Snow lay thickly everywhere; it was still falling fast and the wind was heaping it into drifts, one of which completely covered the gate. It was one of winter's marvelous transformation scenes, and these always held for her a wonderful fascination.

For some time she gazed upon it, then began her morning toilet with the thought, not unwelcome—"I may have to stay here all day whether I wish it or not."

She was dressed and writing a letter when a tap sounded on the door and with a gay "Merry Christmas!" her hostess entered the room.

"How fresh you look!" Mrs. Brown said. "You must have slept well, I am sure. The weather seems to have made it pretty certain that you are to spend Christmas with us, and I hope you are as well satisfied over the prospect as we are. And now are you ready for breakfast?"

Janet took the older woman's hands in hers, and looked straight into her eyes.

"You are just as lovely to me as you can be, dear Mrs. Brown," she said. "I thank you from the depths of my heart. But the fact remains that I am an interloper and I don't want to intrude upon your Christmas yet. Let me stay up here awhile; it is warm and I have letters to write. I am in no hurry for my breakfast."

Mrs. Brown laughed and kissed her on the cheek. "You are thinking of the exchange of gifts for one thing, I imagine. That is over and we are anxious to display them. We shall all be disappointed if you do not take breakfast with us.

"Now, my dear, don't let me hear one more word about intruding. You will be obliged to spend your Christmas here and we shall greatly enjoy your doing so. We shall be shut up in the house today and we'll have just as good a time as we can. I hope you will not be too much disappointed at not being able to spend your holiday with your friend?"

"I am not disappointed, Mrs. Brown," Janet answered. "If you want me I am glad to stay. There is time for a good visit with Mabel, but it is not probable that I shall ever be in your

charming home again, and I appreciate the privilege of being here today."

"And I appreciate that compliment," Mrs. Brown rejoined smilingly. "Come now; the others will be getting impatient."

Janet was greeted with a "Merry Christmas!" from each of the waiting group, Ralph supplementing his with "Now, Miss Sidney, you've got to stay here today after all! Good!"

"Ralph expresses the sentiment of all of us, though not in the most elegant form," observed Mr. Brown, senior, with his genial smile.

"I thank you all so much," Janet responded. "But you are making the punishment for my blunder of yesterday so delightful that it will not serve in the least as a warning against others in the future."

"Never mind. Christmas is no time for 'dreadful warnings,' Miss Sidney," Mr. Brown, junior, returned gaily. "We are all grateful to your blunder. Fate has been kind indeed to leave a guest at our door on the eve of such a holiday as this promises to be."

"Why, yes! You're a regular Christmas present, Miss Sidney," declared Ralph with enthusiasm.

Janet laughed. "How little did my driver last evening dream that in his humble person he represented both Fate and St. Nicholas!" she exclaimed merrily.

Breakfast over the Browns and their guest devoted themselves to solid enjoyment of the day. Janet, now thoroughly at ease, entered with child-like abandon into all festivities, thus endearing herself still more to the outspoken Ralph and the quiet Edith, who clung to her admiringly and whispered more than once, "I wish you were my sister, Miss Sidney."

All hands helped in the preparation of the Christmas feast, Janet concocting a salad which was unanimously voted the best ever tasted.

"If I were a sentimental young lady, I should say this salad is a dream," Mr. Edward Brown declared, as he helped himself for the third time.

"That's very nice of you, but I suspect there's a good deal of gallantry about it," said Janet. "Don't let your devotion to my salad make you neglect anything else. Whatever their dinner may be at the right Mr. Brown's, it can't equal this, I am positive."

The day was over only too soon for all, but Janet's visit was not yet ended. The state of the roads, on the next day and the next, made all idea of leaving impracticable, a state of affairs entirely satisfactory not only to the family but to Janet as well.

And she was an ideal guest—helpful, yet not obtrusively so, enjoying everything, giving no unnecessary trouble, resourceful in

entertainment for the children, and entering with zest into every plan for amusement.

"I have never had so enjoyable a visitor in my house," declared Mrs. Brown emphatically to her husband.

On the afternoon of the fourth day it was reluctantly conceded by the Browns, father and son, that the trip to the other Mr. Brown's might be undertaken; and possibly the prospect of a ten-mile drive with Janet reconciled the younger man to her going—he had abandoned the idea of simply taking her to the station, and she had agreed with perfect willingness to the present plan.

So the good-byes were said. Mr. Curtis Brown's farewell was fatherly and affectionate; Mrs. Brown folded Janet in a motherly embrace; Edith wept and Ralph vehemently declared that there wasn't a bit of sense in her going so soon, and he knew they'd get stuck in a snow-drift. He hoped so, anyhow; then maybe they'd know enough to turn round and come back.

She did not come back that day, but the next Christmas eve she sat again at Mr. Curtis Brown's board and great was the rejoicing.

"You're our Christmas present this year, for sure, Miss Sidney—I mean sister Janet," exclaimed Ralph, the irrepressible.

"Yes; I thought I'd give you all one this year that was worth while," said Mr. Edward Brown, looking proudly into the happy face of his wife.

Between mouthfuls of fried chicken Ralph added, "I suppose she found out that you were the right Mr. Brown after all."



The Best Decorator in the City.

By Hepsy Neff.

Some people are asleep most of the time. Not that they go around with their eyes shut, although for that matter they might as well. They would see just as much as they do with their eyes open. There is a seeing eye and a seeing mind. The first is common to all animals and some people. The last belongs to those who think, which means but one out of every ten people you meet.

Otto Jenson was a boy who had not only the seeing eye but the seeing mind. He was always finding out the "why" of things, and when he had found it he acted on it. When he was a boy on the farm he had not only fed the hogs but he fed them in a clean place, believing that health and filth could not exist together. When he followed the plow he not only ran a furrow across the field, but that furrow was straight and the shining black loam lay straight and smooth from one end to the other. There were others on the farm—Otto's brothers—who could not see that a straight, smooth furrow was any better than a broken, crooked one; who could see no connection between the methods of feeding and disease. So Otto turned the farm over to them and went to town.

The little German village to which he went—with its one general store and eleven saloons—was made up of people most of whom were asleep. Whose mental machinery seldom moved unless started by a pint of beer.

Otto soon cleaned up the dirty little store, astonishing the owner by sweeping the floor every day and washing the windows as often as once a week—an unheard of proceeding. When he got things clean he began to put unusual things in the windows. Sometimes changes followed each other very rapidly. The passers-by opened their eyes to notice that a rainy day filled the windows with shiny rubbers, rubber boots and umbrellas, a snow storm brought out overcoats, mittens and wraps of all kinds, while even a flood of sunshine could not seem to get much ahead of the handsomest prints and the newest goods. This kind of work was no part of the contract when Otto was hired, because the proprietor of the store never saw anything like it. How could he! He had been asleep for forty years.

But when dainty sprays of pussy-willows drooped over the daintiest spring goods and pale spring beauties lay thickly among a window full of children's shoes, the old town so far awoke as to laugh outright and to declare with one voice: "That Jensen feller is a master hand at foolin' with windows."

But some one else had been watching things around the old

store, and when a certain traveling man, returning to his employers in the great city, found his firm in despair over the question of window decoration he promptly said, "Jensen back there in M—— is your man." And that is how Otto Jensen, the farmer boy, came to go to the city.

And it was not long before some one else went to the city too. For this boy with the seeing mind found little on which his mind could feed and grow, in piles of brick and stone. He hungered for home, for sympathy, for a love that saw what he saw. He left the farm that he might keep his own ideals, his own bent of mind. He could only find companions in his new surroundings by seeing what they saw; by making himself over and making himself like those with whom he was thrown. But he had sense enough to see that he was valuable to his employers just because he was unlike other men employed there. And like the true farmer boy that he was he chose to be himself.

Back in the old schoolhouse was a dainty little schoolma'am who learned fractions with him and who had always been his best friend. It mattered not that other young men whose salaries were larger than his were unmarried, because they "could not afford to marry." Otto knew Nellie and Nellie knew him. So he hunted all around the city until he found the snuggest little box of a house set in a big old-fashioned garden. It was quite in the country too, with a fine bit of woodland not half a mile away.

After figuring all over seven sheets of foolscap, Otto decided that his salary would pay carfare and rent, furnish twenty dollars a month for regular expenses, ten dollars for clothes and still leave a margin of ten dollars each month for emergencies. When he told Nellie about it she said that was enough and as he thought so too the little house was rented and Nellie came.

Day after day Otto went back and forth from the country home which he loved to his work in the city, eating his breakfast at five o'clock in the morning, which was no hardship to a country boy, and taking the car at half past five in order to get his work in shape before the streets began to fill. Bits of country beauty went with him, from the old-fashioned garden and the sweet-scented woodland, with its little brooks washing the roots of the old trees. Sometimes it was only odd little nosegays that Nellie prepared for him; sometimes it was baskets of wild flowers, violets and sweet williams and apple blossoms; sometimes it was yards and yards of festoons, enough to carry a trail of green or of autumn glory from one end of the big store to the other.

When Otto was married he told no one at the store for a long time. He early discovered that in the city it was not considered "good form" for a man to be married until he was thirty or thirty-five and had an income of at least two thousand a year. But Otto had seen that the trees about the old farm that had room

to grow in their own way were far more shapely than those that struggled for space in a crowded forest. And how can a man grow in his own way except in his home? So he kept his happy secret to himself and Nellie helped him by staying away from the store. In fact she could see that her clothes were not quite the latest cut, but they were neat and Otto liked them and that was enough.

With the first of January and the beginning of Otto's second year his salary went to seventy-five dollars a month and the foolish fellow forgot all caution, and, that night, boldly carried home one of the handsomest jackets of the season to Nellie. The next morning he faced a running fire from all sides; for "Mr. Jensen," though the "boys" thought him "queer," had come to be almost as well known in the store as the proprietor himself. In fact that gentleman gave him such a jolly and not wholly disapproving bit of chaffing that Otto's cheeks were as red as the bitter sweet berries that bordered his best window.

By this time the little home nest was so tasty and comfortable that Otto began inviting the "boys" out on Sunday, and Nellie gave them such good things to eat, such delicious home cooking, that boarding-house fare seemed intolerable for a whole week after. The atmosphere of the plain, happy little home, too, was a thing so distinctly apart and unlike the common city life that it came to be talked about, and one or two of the fellows, in their secret hearts, admitted that they were hungry for more of it.

Otto seemed so pleased and proud to have inquiries made about his home and his wife that everybody in the big store kept some nice question ready for him just to see his eyes shine.

As autumn came on Otto went about his work with unusual haste and seemed eager to leave the store; a condition wholly unlike his usual faithfulness. He seemed more quiet too and often had to be spoken to a second time, so absorbed was he in his work—or something.

On the day after Christmas he came in late, as did half the force for that matter. But, while every one else seemed tired and dull, Otto's eyes were shining like two stars, and try as he would he could not keep back the smile that twitched at the corners of his mouth. His happiness was so manifest that the first man to get near enough said, "Hello, old man! You're like a glass of fresh cider this morning. What did you get for Christmas that makes you so jolly?"

"Twins," said Otto, with a promptness that almost felled his questioner to the floor.

"Wh—what did you say?" with a bewildered stare and a gasp for breath.

"Twins," again said Otto, coming close and speaking in a low hurried whisper. "A Christmas gift fit for a king. The finest twin boys in the state. And Nellie is as happy as a bird."

The news flew over the big store like an alarm of fire. Customers waited for their goods and got the wrong parcels and could not get their change, but the news of Nellie's babies had to be told. Before an hour there wasn't a dull face in the building. Even the elevator boys smiled and the stupid patrons who always asked twice for the lace department, when it was on the first floor, thought them the most gentlemanly boys in the city.

When the hour for closing came a huge basket-car was brought into the main aisle, bearing a big card which said, "For the Twins." Mr. Blake himself bought the handsomest double baby cab in the house and dropped it in. Gift after gift followed until the basket could not, by any squeezing and crowding, be made to hold another thing. Then Otto was called in and asked if he would do the firm the favor to see that this consignment of goods was delivered to whom it was addressed. Of course he made a little awkward speech or tried to do so—blushing and stammering and smiling—what else could he do?

But it wasn't necessary for him to do anything else for everybody was just as happy as could be, already. And to this day, the big, stupid fellow doesn't know why his friends did such an unheard of thing.

The next morning Otto sought admission to the office as early as possible. Mr. Blake looked up from his desk and smiled to see the best decorator in the city turning his hat over and over in his hands and blushing like a school-girl.

"Mr. Blake," he began; "I—we—Nellie and I want to thank you for your great kindness. We—we shall always remember it, and we shall—we want—to name our boys—Bland—that is for Nellie, her maiden name, and Blake—that is for you, sir—if we may?" and the perspiration stood in little beads along his temples.

Mr. Blake laid his head back on the rim of his office chair and laughed outright. Then springing up he gave Otto's hand a grip that left it aching for an hour.

"Good, good!" he cried, "that's right! I like that! And here's something maybe you will like. And may the boys be an honor to both firms." And he thrust into Otto's hand a letter announcing a raise of twenty-five dollars a month in his salary.

And this is a true bit of the history of "The Best Decorator in the City."

The Shout Fiscal's Prisoner.

By Alice Louise Lee.

CHAPTER I.

"Twelve o'clock and all is well!"

It was midnight on the twenty-fifth of June, 1659. At nine o'clock every fire had been covered and every candle snuffed out in the little Dutch town of New Amsterdam. The public houses had been closed, a single sentry posted in each sentinel box at the four corners of Fort Amsterdam, and the silent town given over into the keeping of the "rattle watch."

One of the watchmen was slowly pacing his beat up from the shore across Marckvelt and along the Great Highway. He stumbled along the unlighted, unpaved road, pausing opposite the steep roof of the residence in which lived the Director General, Petrus Stuyvesant. The watchman stood staring up at the huge chimneys rearing themselves above the fort's parapet, and speculating on the whereabouts of the silver plate stolen so recently from the Director General, when a flying step at his side caused the protector of New Amsterdam to shrink suddenly into the shadow of the fort. He recovered himself in time to recognize the fleeing traveler, a small, bare-foot boy.

"Ah!" muttered the watchman, "It's Henricus, Pelgrum Clooc's boy. Poor lad! I wonder what will become of him after to-morrow."

The watchman did not attempt to follow the boy, but continued his way with more caution after his fright. It reminded him of the presence of the hostile and mighty "heathen" just north of The Shingle towards which he was bound.

New Amsterdam was a very small town with the houses huddled together south of a high wall built along the line of the present Wall Street. This wall, raised for protection against the hostile Indians, extended across the southern point of Manhattan Island. Along the wall, called "The Shingle," several members of the rattle watch had been stationed for better security against a night attack.

The watchman on the Great Highway, having reached the Land Gate, retraced his steps to the shore. Looming up before him in the darkness were the gibbet and stocks almost at the water's edge. The man carelessly twitched a rope, new and stiff, which hung from the gibbet.

"Tomorrow," he said aloud, "what a sight will be here. Whippings and putting into stocks there have been in plenty, but 'tis not often we are treated to a hanging. 'Twas a most foolish thing

to do—but then—” flipping the rope’s end away from him, “what’s the use of wasting pity on a criminal? He hangs tomorrow.”

The watchman turned his eyes toward the Stadt Huys which was court room, prison and home in one. The strong room faced the gibbet, but the starlight was too dim to show the outline of its little window from which the watch imagined Pelgrum Clocq must be peering.

Suddenly reminded of his duties, he sang out, “One o’clock and all is well!”

From here and there through the village came answering voices from the watch: “One o’clock and all is well!”

But all was not well. The sound of the monotonous call had startled two figures crouching beneath the window of the strong room. They were the forms of the prisoner and his son Henricus. No, all was not well, as the Shout Fiscal, or sheriff, Mynheer Van der Veen, learned the next morning at sunrise, when he ascended to the second floor to ring the sunrise bell.

He left his wife, Vrouw Anna, in the living-room getting the breakfast. She bustled about, her heavy shoes making a great noise on the floor and disarranging the sand patterns so carefully laid out the previous day. Her numerous short skirts seemed to partake of her energy as she grated cheese into a huge wooden platter.

The morning was cool, and a fire had been lighted in the great fireplace. At one side of the blaze, sitting on a projecting stone, was a boy some twelve or thirteen years old. He was bending over his wooden shoes, fastening them slowly and thoughtfully. His hair, worn long, according to Dutch fashion, fell in waves over his shoulders, and half concealed, as he stooped, a round, full boyish face and bright black eyes which seemed not made to wear their present dejected expression.

“Ding-dong,” sounded the Stadt Huys bell over their heads. “Crackle, snap,” went the flames to the accompaniment of Vrouw Anna’s cheese moving hastily over the grater.

When the bell ceased the housewife turned her head and revealed a pair of eyes as black as those of her son. “Rutgert,” she said hastily, “go you now for the water and see to it you do not keep your father waiting for his breakfast. The hanging is at nine and,” looking at the hour glass, “here it is six.”

The boy swallowed hard, rose slowly to his feet, and was reaching for the wooden bucket hanging from a hook on the wall, when there came a loud exclamation from the Shout Fiscal, “He has escaped!”

With her cap strings flying, Vrouw Anna mounted the stairs, and after her clattered Rutgert, his eyes dilating. They found the Shout staring blankly into the empty strong room where he had expected to find his prisoner.

Rutgert went directly to the window. "Look you here, father," he cried. "He has escaped through the bars."

Van der Veen stepped to his son's side. The iron bars which had secured the windows were loosened.

"There is not a moment to be lost," said the Shout. "Go quickly, Rutgert, and arouse the town. Search must be made instantly."

Rutgert's face fell. He opened his lips as though to speak, but, closing them suddenly, went slowly down the stairs. The mother noticed his reluctance but made no comment on it. He went out on the De Perel Road and glanced with a shudder at the gibbet cheated of its prey. The first man he met was the watchman of the previous night, who, released from his duties by the sunrise bell, was going home.

"Jan," said Rutgert slowly, "Mynheer Clocq has escaped."

"Saint Nicholas!" cried Jan with a start. "That was what Henricus was about last night."

"Henricus!" said Rutgert eagerly. "Tell me, Jan, where you saw Henricus."

But Jan was off on a run to spread the news while Rutgert returned with the gathering crowd to the Stadt Huys.

It was not often that the quiet little village was treated to a sensation like this, and the people made the most of it. To be sure they would probably be cheated out of the anticipated hanging, but there would be the excitement of a search for the escaped prisoner and hanging afterwards. Men who had started for their day's work hastened back. Women left their household affairs, and catching up their babies, ran to the Stadt Huys.

The only one in the crowd who was an attentive listener and said nothing was Rutgert. He followed his father closely and listened with interest to the orders for the search.

"The boy must have gone with him," said Tienhoven, Stuyvesant's secretary, pushing through the crowd. "He was a bright little youngster, always around when his father was at work in the fort."

"He passed me last night at midnight," cried Jan.

"Where? Why didn't you stop him? Was he alone?" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"He ran rapidly past me when I was on Marckvelt. He was alone," answered Jan.

"Two are easier to find than one. We will soon have them," said the Shout Fiscal confidently to Tienhoven.

"Why are you so sure?" asked Tienhoven.

"Why, man, they are concealed somewhere in the town. Look you! the Hellegat has been running too strong all night for a boat to venture over to Breuckelen. And do you forget that The Shingle is well watched? It is not probable that two could scale

the wall without being seen by the rattle watch. And there you are! Pelgrum Clocq must be somewhere in New Amsterdam," Van der Veen concluded in triumph and Cornelius Tienhoven went back to the fort to report to Stuyvesant.

The Shout Fiscal had summed up the situation as it appeared to all the searchers, yet to make the capture sure they went beyond The Shingle and beat the forest as far north as their dread of the Indians permitted them to go, but no trace could they find of Pelgrum Clocq. Men in the town were hunting houses and barns, peering into every nook and corner, questioning closely the householders, but to no avail.

Finally someone suddenly remarked: "The lad was with him, maybe aided his escape. Then where is Rutgert? The boys were always together. Perhaps he can lead us to some hiding place."

One of Rutgert's playmates ran to find him. Unlike the other boys in the settlement, Rutgert had not joined in the hunt. He sat back of the kitchen beside the enormous brick oven. When he heard for what he was wanted the boy flushed. "I must stay and attend to heating the oven," he returned, adding angrily. "If you want to hunt Henricus, do so, I will not."

But the men were not to be turned from their purpose. It was well known how intimate were the sons of the Shout Fiscal and the carpenter Clocq, and already Rutgert's behavior was the subject of comment. Perhaps the youngster knew too much of the escape of Clocq, the people said to each other. The two boys were as David and Jonathan and what more natural than Henricus' father should have an abettor in his escape in the son of Shout Fiscal, who lived so conveniently at the Stadt Huys?

The refusal of her son to assist the searching party made Vrouw Anna impatient. She at once released Rutgert from his charge and bade him use every means in his power to aid the men. "Your father is responsible for the prisoner," she said in a low tone that the waiting boy might not hear, "and see to it that you let it not come to the ears of the Director that the Shout Fiscal's son would not aid in Pelgrum's recovery. Go now and do your duty cheerfully."

Thus adjured Rutgert went, but not cheerfully. He carried a heavy heart as he led the men into the secret haunts where Henricus and he had fought imaginary Indians and shot imaginary bears. In spite of his thirteen summers the boy could scarcely restrain his tears at the thought of Henricus, who, if caught, would fall under the hand of the law for aiding his father's escape. There were other things, too, which were troubling Rutgert and which made him a silent guide. One of these things was Indians' Cave outside the wall beyond the village commons. Of this cave he said nothing to the men.

It was an anxious face which the Shout Fiscal brought with

him to the dinner table. Vrouw Anna had made her lightest waffles and grated some of her best cheese to tempt her husband's appetite, but in vain, the cares of office weighed too heavily upon him.

"Is there no trace, no clew of them, father?" asked Rutgert who was scarcely tasting his dinner.

"None whatever," replied his father. Then turning to his son he asked sternly, "Why would you not willingly join in the search this morning?"

Vrouw Anna glanced anxiously at her husband and shook her head. She had been watching Rutgert's strange and conscious behavior all morning and secretly feared that the suspicions entertained by the hunting party were well founded. She had hesitated to question her son.

"Because of Henricus," answered Rutgert readily.

"But you know what reasons the people are giving each other?"

"No, sir."

"They say," said the Shout, watching closely the effect of his words on his son, "that you helped them escape, and the gossip has come to Governor Stuyvesant's ears."

"You can tell them," said Rutgert, looking into his father's eyes steadily, "that I know no more of Pelgrum Clocq's escape than you do."

Vrouw Anna breathed a sigh of relief and leaned back. The sigh was echoed from Van der Veen who said, "Then I can go with an easier mind to the fort this afternoon, for his Worshipful Honor has summoned the council to act on the case. It would appear as if the ground had opened and swallowed Clocq and Henricus, so completely have they disappeared. It is certain they are in the town, for there was no way of escape by land or water, and now the guard has been doubled."

Rutgert thought otherwise but said nothing and his father continued, "Such base ingratitude as Pelgrum showed the Director for all his kindness!"

Rutgert's face flushed.

"I tell you, father, I do not believe Mynheer Clocq is the thief!"

His father lowered the bowl of thick buttermilk he had raised to his lips and looked at his son in amazement. "Was not the silver bowl found hidden in Pelgrum's bed? Was not Pelgrum working in the Director's house? Was he not alone in the house at the time of the theft? What better proof do you want?"

"But Mynheer Clocq denied the theft," insisted Rutgert. "He said that he knew not that the bowl was hidden in his house."

"A man who would steal of course would not lie," said Van der Veen drily.

"I don't believe he would lie any more than would Henricus," muttered Rutgert rebelliously.

"That Henricus!" exclaimed his mother. "Would that you had never seen the youngster!"

"And I, too," added the Shout, "if he is going to be the means of casting suspicion on you. When Clocq was arrested, why did I not forbid the association?"

Rutgert returned no answer.

As Mynheer Van der Veen arose from the table he turned to his son and said impressively, "One thing bear in mind, Rutgert. You must help with the search. You must turn away these suspicions or it may lead you to the stocks or the public whip. You must say to the others what you have said to me—that you know nothing of the escape."

But Rutgert was given little time to act according to his father's commands. The Shout Fiscal had not been gone long to the fort before Cornelius Tienhoven was dispatched with the injunction from Stuyvesant to bring the youngster, Rutgert Van der Veen, before the council.

Rutgert's heart sank within him at the summons. His feet would scarcely obey his will as they started for the fort. There were some questions which might be asked that he feared.

The great gate opening into the fort from the Marckvelt looked so grim and forbidding that it tempted the boy to take to his heels. But Tienhoven held his arm with a firm grip.

Inside the earthen walls a few soldiers lounged before their barracks opposite the Governor's house. Men were scarce and the fort had but few defenders. These few regarded Rutgert with intense interest, for all knew why he was brought before the council.

Stuyvesant's house was palatial for New Amsterdam. It was two stories high and constructed of brick. At another time Rutgert would have been gratified at the opportunity of entering it. Henricus had been all through the house many times and related in detail the splendors which Stuyvesant had brought over from Holland. He had described the massive silver plate, a piece of which had been recently found in his father's house.

Pelgrum Clocq was a carpenter who, with his son Henricus, a boy near Rutgert's age, had come over from Holland and taken up his residence in a little red tiled hut near The Shingle. He had been much employed about the fort and the Director's house. At the time of the theft he had been at work on some repairs in the council chamber, boarding up the great fire-place, whose wide chimney created a draft in the chamber which was too strong for Stuyvesant's rheumatism even on a hot summer's day.

The value of the plate which was taken from Stuyvesant, coupled with the fact that the grim old Director General thought it time to stop thieving in New Amsterdam by a severe course of punishment, led the council to pass the sentence of death on

Clocq. So harsh a sentence did not shock the Dutch community, as light offences in those days met with a heavy, often a fatal, penalty at the hands of the public whipper.

Under these circumstances Rutgert found no pleasure in gazing around the living-room with its rich hangings through which he was led into the presence of the Schepens and Burgomasters of New Amsterdam.

Tienhoven, escorting the boy to a table before which sat his Worshipful Honor Petrus Stuyvesant, retired to his own table ready to take down any notes required by the latter. Rutgert had never been in this room, and he glanced around with awe. These men who sat looking at him so gravely were all known to him in the walks of every-day life. But now, in their capacity as law-givers of the town, they were formidable personages. Even his father, who, as Shout Fiscal, was next in authority to Stuyvesant, and sat at the Director's right, seemed a different man from the father with whom he had eaten so short a time before. Mynheer Van der Veen gazed at his son with an expression intended to be stern, but which showed more anxiety than any other emotion.

"Well, Rutgert," said Stuyvesant not unkindly, "are you anxious for Pelgrum Clocq to be found?"

Rutgert took hold of the table for support and looked imploringly at his father, but received no response save a deepening of the lines on his forehead. Dutch children were reared with a strict regard for the truth and Rutgert's training in this respect was no exception. After an instant, he answered truthfully:

"No, please your Honor."

"Why not?" questioned Stuyvesant.

"Because of Henricus," replied Rutgert.

His hold on the table loosened and he stood erect. The Director's next remark brought a pallor to his cheek but did not daunt him.

"Did you know, younker, that you might be committed to the stocks for what you seem to know of this affair?"

"And what do I know?" cried Rutgert, turning questioner so suddenly that Stuyvesant was nonplused for a moment.

"Well, what do you know?" he asked finally.

"Nothing," said Rutgert quite calmly.

The members of the council shook their heads.

"Did you know that there would be an attempt on the part of Clocq to escape last night?" asked Stuyvesant, eyeing Rutgert keenly.

The boy's eyes did not fall. "May it please your Worshipful Honor, I had no idea he intended such a thing."

"But now that they have escaped, do you know where they are hiding?"

"No, your Worshipful Honor, I do not," said Rutgert emphatically but with a certain expression of consciousness and anxiety which did not escape Stuyvesant's notice.

"Have you a suspicion of their hiding place, younker?"

Rutgert's knees knocked together in fear. He dared not utter an untruthful "No," and he could not bring himself immediately to assent. "There is no place where I have the least reason to suspect they are concealed, your Honor," he faltered.

"But nevertheless I see you do suspect. Did you show the men this morning all the haunts frequented by you and Henricus?"

A blur came before Rutgert's eyes. The heads of the men leaning eagerly forward seemed to enlarge. When he replied his voice sounded far away.

"No, your Honor, there was one other place."

"That I had supposed," said the Director in triumph. "Where is the spot?"

Rutgert recovered himself with another effort and made his defense in clear bold tones: "I led the men to every place I knew within the walls. It seemed useless to go outside as the watchmen said 'twas impossible for anyone to escape over the wall without being seen by them. Besides that, Sir, the place is so far beyond the wall that we have not been there since the early spring out of fear of the Indians. Henricus would not dare to take his father there for the heathen might attack them at any time."

Stuyvesant listened with a frown. "Such a harangue for a younker to make!" he said impatiently. "Boy, let us judge the whys and wherefores. Probably 'tis here you'll find Pelgrum—" to the council.

Then addressing Rutgert again, "Is this the only place you have kept secret or are there others?"

"There are no others," said Rutgert solemnly.

"And this spot, what is it?" continued the Director.

"It is a cave, Indian's Cave we call it," answered Rutgert with downcast eyes. He was filled with shame and grief to think that he, Henricus' best friend, should be giving damaging information against the unfortunate and, as Rutgert believed, innocent father. For Rutgert's belief amounted almost to a certainty with him that the two had somehow escaped from the town and found a lodging in Indian's Cave. It might be that they had left before this and gone back in the forest to the hut of some friendly Indian, but the cave, known only to Henricus and himself, must have received them last night. They had eluded the vigilance of the rattle watch and found their way to that place of refuge, thought Rutgert.

It was with a heavy heart that he heard Stuyvesant command his father with five others to visit the cave with himself as guide. The men donned their large hats silently and passed down the stairs. On the front stoop their guns, without which they seldom

stirred, were stacked. Throwing these over their shoulders and followed by a troupe of villagers who were still searching, the men with Rutgert in their midst set out.

Through the Land Gate and over the village commons the company took their way. Rutgert strained his eyes across the open field. If the fugitives were in the cave surely they would hear the noise of the thoughtless crowd and make their escape. If they did he could see them because at a distance he could locate the mouth of the cave where the rest did not suspect its existence. The playmates had not been there since early spring, and seeing no movement about the cave to indicate the escape of the occupants Rutgert watched eagerly to see if the rushes were growing undisturbed about the entrance. He could not repress an exclamation of distress when he saw that the grasses and bushes had been recently trampled.

CHAPTER II.

When the party arrived at the entrance of the cave, so skillfully had nature concealed it that for the moment they were inclined to think Rutgert was deceiving them. But after he had pulled away a stone and parted the bushes, and the cave's mouth was found to be no larger than a man's body, no one seemed so anxious to find Pelgrum Clocq as formerly. There was a hesitation of an instant only before the Shout Fiscal, holding his gun before him, pushed into the opening closely followed by the others.

Rutgert, left outside, held his breath and listened for the sound of a struggle or even an exclamation which should tell him of the capture of the criminal and his son. He, in imagination, already saw Henricus put in stocks for aiding in his father's escape, and imagined the look of reproach that he, Rutgert, would merit from his friend. He could scarcely believe his own eyes when after a few minutes the party, dusty and sneezing, but with no additions, struggled into the open air again.

"They are not there?" cried Rutgert eagerly of his father.

"Not a trace of them," returned the Shout Fiscal in disgust.

"I had suspected they were here, but now, father, really I have no idea, no other suspicion about them," cried the boy emphatically.

Van der Veen looked around. "Here was an excellent place for them to hide, that is true," said he meditatively. "We must have a care of this place until they are found. If my youngster here had not directed us we would never have suspected the existence of the cave."

"And not so far from the town but what they could venture without much fear of Indians," added one of the men ignoring his

hesitancy to enter the cave out of fear of the presence of these same "mighty heathen."

"They may have been here and gone again," said the Shout.

"Scarcely possible," returned the other. "It's not four hours since we thoroughly beat the forest around here. No, we seem to be of the same opinion that they are hiding in the town."

"But where?" said Van der Veen impatiently.

Rutgert accompanied his father back to the council chamber and said to Stuyvesant as he had said to his father that further than his suspicions concerning the cave he knew nothing of Clocq and Henricus. Then, released from the Director's presence, he ran home with a lighter heart than he had before carried that day.

"Strange, strange," said Stuyvesant after the boy had gone. "It is a mysterious enough disappearance. And you think they must be in New Amsterdam?" to the Shout Fiscal.

The Shout again enumerated the arguments in proof of the fact that it was impossible for the two to escape from the town.

"I intend," returned the Director slowly, "to make it worth the while of every man, woman and child in the place to bring Pelgrum Clocq to justice. I shall myself offer for his apprehension. Long enough we have had the town overrun with petty thieves, but so great a theft as this must be suitably punished. If the proper authority is not strong enough to keep us safely, then we must take measures to protect ourselves."

The Shout Fiscal flushed angrily at this reflection on himself and replied hotly, "Your Honor knows that I have never been remiss in my duties. Offer a reward if you will. I shall merit it myself even though I would not touch it. Everything that is possible to do I have done and am doing."

Stuyvesant gave Van der Veen a coolly inquiring glance. In answer to it the Shout continued, "You know there is not a corner in this town but what has been entered again and again today. The houses have been searched. The night watch has been doubled and a day watch placed not only on The Shingle, but along the shore so no boat can come or go without the occupants being known. Nor are these precautions to be abated until Pelgrum Clocq is found."

The council's deliberation ended and Stuyvesant directed his secretary to write out placards, which Rutgert found first thing the following day posted on sign-boards throughout the town. These boards were used for the publication of all ordinances by the council from the fort, and by them that day the inhabitants of New Amsterdam found it indeed worth an effort to apprehend the escaped prisoner. A reward of three hundred beaver skins was offered for one Pelgrum Clocq, thief, the reward to be given for the prisoner dead or alive. This stern Dutch justice none questioned.

Rutgert found a group collected around each board in the town. He listened to men joining themselves into parties to search the woods. He found small companies of his playmates who were starting already to peer into cellars and explore barns.

To one of these parties Rutgert attached himself, mindful of his father's instructions of the day before. He never led in the search nor wished it to be successful, although the boy's curiosity as to the whereabouts of Henricus was great.

The days passed slowly until a week had elapsed since the escape and still no trace of the fugitive could be found.

One evening Rutgert sat on the bench beside the brick oven listening to the gossip between his mother and a neighboring woman. His mother was watching the oven this time. Rutgert had built a fire in it and after the floor and brick sides were hot he had carefully cleaned out the ashes and left the oven to his mother. Wooden shovel in hand, Vrouw Anna now stood by the door removing from time to time the loaves of brown bread baking on the stone floor. As usual her conversation with Vrouw Tyrenje was concerning the absorbing topic of the week.

"Little good it does me to stand by the oven these days," said Vrouw Anna peering within, "for no one eats. My husband sits at the table and never tastes food often. He sits until he thinks of a possible hiding place and then hurries off to search it. And the youngster here is little better. His appetite is gone also."

Vrouw Anna put her shovel in at the oven door and balanced on it a light, flaky, crusted loaf. Rutgert looked at it longingly and interrupted his mother.

"If you please, mother, I should like the crust of that loaf. I am hungry."

"Hungry!" echoed Vrouw Anna, "and it's scarce an hour since supper. I don't wonder as you ate only a small piece of cheese and a cup of buttermilk."

The mother carried the loaf into the kitchen and presently reappeared with a generous slice. "I only wish your father would eat as much."

Rutgert slowly ate the bread and the women went on with their conversation.

"Still no clue, is there?" asked Vrouw Tyrenje.

"None whatever. I think," said Vrouw Anna energetically, "that the men are stupid to insist on Pelgrum's being here in the town hidden. It's my belief that he's on his way to the Plymouth colony or gone to Fort Orange."

"But how could he have gone?" questioned her companion.

"A friendly Indian might have braved the waves that night even if he could not have gone by way of The Shingle. The Indians are famous oarsmen."

"Yes, but they have become so hostile of late that there is no pacifying them. Stuyvesant is not taking the right course with them."

"As he never takes the right course with anything," added Vrouw Anna, lowering her voice.

"There is another thing," said Vrouw Tyrenje. "If they are in the town, who is feeding them? Surely they will soon be starved out."

This was a new idea to Rutgert. He left off eating his bread. Henricus actually hungry, perhaps, while he had more than he could eat!

"It is not with reason that one would feed them now, especially after the reward which his Highness has offered. Why, it seems to me everyone in the place is hunting them."

"Indeed that is true," ejaculated her companion. "Look at Peter Kock! His garden is all grown up in weeds from the week's end rain, and he off peering and prying everywhere to earn the reward. His wife's partly to blame. His cow scarcely gets milked either. And they say Jansen Deventer has given up looking at his beaver traps altogether, and spends the days rowing around the coast, as far away as he dare go, looking for Peigrum. It's not among possible things that the man is still in New Amsterdam."

Vrouw Anna removed her last loaf of bread, and the two women continued their gossip in the living-room. Rutgert, with his half-eaten slice of bread still in his hand, wandered down De Perel Road. His appetite was gone. The possibility of Henricus hiding away in hunger had robbed the bread of its delicious flavor.

One of his playmates overtook him. "Hi, Rutgert! Have you a place in mind to hunt?"

"Hunt! No," returned Rutgert angrily. "All you can think about is hunt, hunt, hunt! Great fun you must think it is."

The boy made a face. "People say it's likely you know where to hunt if you would. Well, if you are fool enough not to earn three hundred beavers' skins, I care not."

Rutgert started on a run and left his tormentor behind.

Along one side of De Perel Road stood houses and barns at any angle it had pleased their owners to put them. The street had no regularity of outline on either side, for the sea encroached on the land opposite the buildings. In order to prevent its wearing away, stakes had been driven along the shore as far north as the Water Gate. These piles had rotted in places and had been mended, leaving a ragged, uneven surface for the waves to beat against. Near the Water Gate the piles had been renewed half way down to the water, and the old stakes had bent out leaving a narrow ledge along which Henricus and Rutgert used to creep, securely screened from all eyes on the land side. Two

or three of the newer stakes had been broken, and the boys had pulled them away and dug a place in the side of the bank large enough to furnish them a seat. Here they often came and ate their lunches, snugly seated with the water of the Hellegat at their feet, while above them overhung the second row of stakes.

The sea birds seemed to watch their coming with favor, for the boys used to scatter crumbs along the ledge and watch the birds devour them.

Toward this nook Rutgert slowly made his way. It was the first time he had visited it alone. Sitting down on a stone, he watched the birds circling above his head, and then with a stick he unthinkingly smoothed the sand wet by recent rains. All the time he was wondering, puzzling over the problem the entire town was trying to solve. Thus occupied, he did not notice that the sun had set, and only the deep tones of the sunset bell recalled him to himself.

The birds had ceased their flight when he arose to go, the uneaten bread still in his hand. Bethinking himself suddenly, he laid the bread down on the stones as a breakfast for the birds, and then hastened homeward.

Early the next morning after the cow had been milked, Rutgert having nothing to do and tired of joining the searchers longer, strayed again to the retreat by the water side. The bread was gone but this circumstance did not excite comment from the boy. The birds must have eaten it that morning. He seated himself on the stone when something beside him caused him to give a loud exclamation of surprise and alarm. On the sand so carefully leveled by him the previous night appeared the prints of two bare feet. It was not possible that his own feet had left the impression, for they had been encased in wooden shoes. They were certainly the foot-prints of Henricus. Rutgert bent lower. Yes, the toes in the two impressions turned toward each other. Henricus had surely been there. Rutgert became faint and sick. It was his friend, probably, who had carried the bread away and not the birds. Henricus, hungry enough to prowl around at night and eat bread laid on the ground. What ought he to do? Betray his friend? From that he shrank in spite of the fact that his father was straining every nerve to gain some clue such as the sand beside him bore. Hastily snatching a stone, he obliterated the tale-tell tracks.

But then, Henricus might starve, though Robert. He sat long and looked out over the blue Hellegat without seeing it. Then he suddenly sprang to his feet, filled with a new idea. He could not do anything himself to help Henricus but there was Dominie Megapolensis! Not that the Dominie ever interested himself in boys beyond strictly requiring them to learn the catechism, but every week he went over to Breuckelen to preach and there he saw

Captain de Vries. It was the latter that Rutgert wished to reach.

Now Captain de Vries was a great personage in New Amsterdam. He even divided the honors of any public occasion with the Director General himself. He had served many years in the victorious armies of the father-land and had later successfully guarded the Dutch possessions in the West Indies until he had been sent to protect New Amsterdam from the "mighty heathen." Recently the Captain had retired from active service and become a patroon near Breuckelen, where he lived in great state with a multitude of slaves and servants. Often had Rutgert and Henricus visited his great manor house, for the captain was fond of young people and these two youngers were his favorites.

Perhaps he could help Henricus somehow. Rutgert had no idea how, but he must appeal to Captain de Vries.

Rutgert could write. Hans Everson, the schoolmaster on De Perel Road, had seen to that. Therefore, after an hour of laborious composition, he stood before Dominie Johannes Megapolensis, who sat smoking on his front stoop which looked out over the Hellegat.

"Ho, Rutgert Van der Veen!" said the Dominie briefly without removing the pipe from his mouth.

Rutgert advanced, amazed at his own temerity in asking a favor of so august a man. "Do you go to Breuckelen tomorrow?" he asked stammeringly.

"I do," returned the Dominie looking hard at this forward youngster, "and what is that to you?"

"In Breuckelen you see Captain de Vries?" Rutgert's heart beat fast.

"I do," said the Dominie looking harder at Rutgert, "and what is that to you?"

Rutgert produced the letter awkwardly sealed and tied. "If only you would take this to Captain de Vries." His words failed him and he added pleadingly, "If only you would."

The Dominie took the letter ungraciously and turned it over. He would have liked to know the contents but Rutgert had already run away, so the Dominie, supposing it to be a communication from Shout Fiscal, put it in one of his numerous pockets, and strange to say—remembered it!

Rutgert fled home alternating between hope and despondency as to the result of his call on the Dominie.

Late in the afternoon he approached his mother kneading bread in the kitchen. "Mother, do you care if I have bread and cheese?"

He feared that she would ask if he were hungry, but the housewife was too busy. Hastily wiping her hands she cut him generous slices. "Right glad am I, Rutgert, that you can again eat," exclaimed Vrouw Anna.

In the evening Mynheer Van der Veen was summoned to the

fort on some business and his wife and son sat up until his return. They occupied the front stoop with no other light than that of the moon. No fires or lighted candles were allowed in New Amsterdam later than nine.

Rutgert slept in a big chair with his head on his arm. Not even the excitement of his morning discovery nor wonder at the fate of the bread and cheese on the ledge could keep him awake.

Presently his mother arose and brought out her hour glass. Holding it up in the moonlight she said with a tired sigh, "It's nearly eleven and your father not home yet. What can keep him?"

Rutgert arose with a start and rubbed his eyes. In the distance a step was heard. It was an unsteady tread accompanied by a shuffling noise.

"Some drunken man," said Vrouw Anna, indignantly drawing back into the shadow as the figure came into view.

A man was advancing slowly, dragging something beside him.

"It's your father, Rutgert," whispered his mother in alarm, springing forward as her husband reached the steps. Then they saw the figure of a boy half led and half dragged by the Shout Fiscal.

"Henricus!" almost shouted Rutgert.

"Hush, I say, instantly!" said Van der Veen sternly. "Not another word. Go into the kitchen and light the candles."

Trembling with excitement, Rutgert, with difficulty, struck the flints and lighted the candles while Vrouw Anna silently assisted her husband to bring Henricus in a fainting condition into the house.

When the light of the candles was thrown on the boy, Rutgert burst into tears at the alteration in his appearance, and Vrouw Anna's eyes were not dry.

Henricus' long hair was full of dirt and cob-webs. His cheeks were pale and sunken.

Van der Veen held the unconscious boy in a chair while he said quietly to his wife, "The first thing necessary is to send Rutgert to bed. Have him go at once so you can assist me."

"No, no," protested Rutgert, "I must speak to Henricus. He is no thief that you send me from him."

But Vrouw Anna, at a nod from her husband, took Rutgert by the arm and led him away. As she left him sobbing at the door of his room, he said, "I know Henricus is hungry. You will at least feed him, mother?"

"I will not let Henricus go hungry tonight," promised his mother.

"And if he must be put in the strong room you will make him a bed?" implored the boy.

His mother hesitated. "That is not for me to promise, Rutgert. I will if possible."

As Vrouw Anna bathed Henricus' face and hands, the boy opened his eyes.

"Would you like food, Henricus? Are you hungry?"

At this question, he suddenly laid one hand on his jacket and then nodded. Nothing was said while she put a substantial supper before him.

To her inquiring looks her husband shook his head and returned no reply but kept near Henricus lest the boy should escape.

After the prisoner had finished his supper Mynheer Van der Veen said firmly, although not unkindly, "Henricus, you know there is no escape. You will be forced to tell where your father lies hidden. It would hurt me greatly to see you fall under the lash or be put in the stocks, but I cannot save you if you interfere with the course of the law. If you tell me tonight I think I can save you from further punishment."

As Henricus returned no reply, Van der Veen continued, "It is useless for you to think you can save your father. All you can do is to save yourself. As I have watched for and caught you so I will find him. Save yourself while you may."

All the reply the boy gave was a dogged shake of the head.

"The stocks and the whip will hurt you cruelly, Henricus," pleaded Vrouw Anna. "Now that you have aided your father, whether wisely or unwisely, all you can, you might at least save yourself the pain. It cannot help your father."

The boy lifted his eyes so full of pleading to the woman that she turned suddenly to snuff the candles in order to hide her emotion. Her husband also was far from feeling as his stern words indicated.

Presently Van der Veen said, "If tomorrow morning you will not tell, I can do no more for you."

Then to his wife, "Anna, bring me the cords."

They were brought, and the better to secure the boy Vrouw Anna removed his jacket. From under it fell large slices of bread and cheese.

"My husband!" cried Vrouw Anna, her voice full of surprise and grief, "These are the very slices I gave a few hours since to Rutgert."

Then Henricus roused himself for the first time to earnest speech: "You must believe me when I say that Rutgert knows nothing whatever about me. Indeed, no, these pieces he laid on the ledge near the Water Gate where we used to play and feed the birds. He did not, he could not know that I would come tonight. These pieces were left for the birds, just as we used to leave them, and I robbed the birds."

Husband and wife gazed at each other doubtfully. Henricus caught the look and went on earnestly. "Rutgert has been wrongly accused. When he was forced to lead you to the cave and go with

the searchers he knew no more of us than did the rest. The people look at him with suspicion wrongly. He knows nothing, I say nothing."

"Would that I could believe you," said Van der Veen with a sigh.

"You may, for I speak truly," said Henricus.

"I believe him," said Vrouw Anna, "Henricus is a truthful youngster. Leave Rutgert to me and say nothing to anybody concerning this. I will see that he feeds no more birds."

Together they locked the bound boy into the strong room which had been repaired since Pelgrum's escape, and then returned to the kitchen.

Suddenly Vrouw Anna gave an exclamation. "Did you notice what Henricus said?" she asked her husband.

The Shout stared at her. "Notice what Henricus said!" he repeated stupidly. "Why, yes. What do you mean? Is there anything strange or new?"

"No, no, my husband! I mean not that. But is this not strange, that he should know just what has been going on these seven days and even what has been said?"

Van der Veen's hand stopped on its way toward snuffing out the last candle, while a thoughtful expression overspread his face. "Surely, Anna, I did not think at the time, but he showed a knowledge of all things concerning the chase, even of what the people suspect of Rutgert. How does he get his knowledge?"

"It is certain that they have hidden in the town," said Vrouw Anna meditatively.

"It would seem so, Anna, but where? Where?"

CHAPTER III.

When Vrouw Anna came into the kitchen next morning she found her son there already. "What! Up so early, Rutgert," she exclaimed, "and you such a sleepy head!"

"I could not sleep, mother, thinking of Henricus," said Rutgert sadly. "Must he be whipped, mother, to make him tell?"

"Your father has now gone to the fort to see about it. He thinks only the stocks will be used."

Rutgert shivered. "If only father would not do it!"

"It is his duty, child, and your father would not be remiss in his duty. I wish the same could be said of you."

"Why, mother!" said Rutgert with a start and a flush.

"Look you here."

Vrouw Anna opened a cupboard and took out a plate on which lay the bread and cheese taken from Henricus. Rutgert's face turned scarlet.

"What have you to say about these, my son? They are the

pieces I gave you yesterday. They were concealed in Henricus' blouse."

Rutgert hung his head and said nothing.

"Your friend tried to protect you by saying they were left out for the birds, but your conscious looks say otherwise. You put these out for Henricus, not for the birds."

"I did not know which would get them," replied Rutgert truthfully.

"What led you to put them on the ledge?" pursued the mother relentlessly.

Rutgert made a full confession, adding, "I had to do it. I could not have slept nor eaten thinking that maybe Henricus would go there hungry and find nothing. I could not be sure that he would go again either, and, mother," straightening himself, "I would rather go to the stocks myself than to have given any clue of Henricus."

Vrouw Anna shook her head in reproof, but secretly she agreed with her husband when he said, "I dare not tell the youngster, Anna, that I cannot help but admire his conduct."

"I thought, Rutgert," she said aloud, "that your father and I fully impressed you with the necessity of allowing no more suspicions to rest on you. Now see! I put away these tell-tale pieces and do you say nothing of them to any one, only, Rutgert, see you feed no more birds on the ledge or elsewhere. But that is not all. Your father requires you to promise that you will not go near Henricus nor speak to him while he is in the stocks today. Will you promise?"

"Yes, if father requires it," replied Rutgert slowly, uncovering the coals in the big fire-place.

He aided his mother in swinging the kettle on the irons over the fire and brought the water from the public well in the middle of De Perel Road. As he raised the bucket he glanced a moment at the window of the strong room and saw a small white face pressed against the bars, and the sight made him grope a moment in vain for the handle of his wooden pail, so full were his eyes.

Already along De Perel Road and down Marckvelt the villagers were trooping to the shore where stood the gibbet and stocks. The news had flown of the capture and probable punishment of Henricus and everyone was curious and anxious about the result. Men collected in groups and discussed again the entire matter of the theft, prisoner and escape. They went over the history of the case as though it were new, eagerly seizing on any detail or suggestion. Women brought their knitting and sat on the strand. They shuddered at the idea of so young a lad being put to shame, yet scarcely removed their eyes from the stocks, and when the Shout Fiscal led Henricus from the Stadt Huys they crowded around with the men.

A harder duty Mynheer Van der Veen never had to perform. He slowly raised the horizontal bars with their semi-circular hollows in which the wrists and neck of Henricus were put and then as slowly lowered the wooden pieces and fastened them, leaving Henricus fast. A watchman stood on guard near by, but Van der Veen did not wander far from the spot.

"I could not feel more sorrowful if Rutgert had been put in the stocks," said the Shout to his wife.

She wiped her eyes and said, softly, "Poor Henricus."

"Yes, and poor Rutgert, too," added her husband. "Our youngster alarms me with his pale looks. Have a care of him, Anna, he ate nothing this morning and now stands down by the wharf looking at the gibbet. He will talk to no one. Had you not better call him to the house?"

Vrouw Anna shook her head. "No, let him alone. He will be better off in the crowd. How long must Henricus stay in the stocks?"

Van der Veen sighed. "We are summoned in council to the fort this afternoon to see about it. At least today if he does not yield. But that he surely will."

"I think not. You will find him a brave boy," replied his wife.

At the end of every hour the Shout Fiscal approached Henricus and urged him to reveal the whereabouts of Pelgrum Clocq. But every hour he was met by the same reply, "I shall not tell."

Under the hot midday sun to which his head was exposed, and in his weakened condition, Henricus soon became so faint and thirsty that he could speak only with an effort. His eyes closed wearily to shut out the crowd which constantly moved about him, coming and going. As hour after hour passed and the people noticed his constant refusals in the face of his growing exhaustion, a feeling of admiration for the boy's bravery found expression all around. Men murmured their praises to each other, and the women, many of them, shed tears of sympathy for the unfortunate Henricus.

At four o'clock the Schepens and Burgomasters of New Amsterdam went up to the fort. The Shout Fiscal was the last member of the council to leave the shore. For the last time he slowly approached the little prisoner. Henricus' mouth was open and Van der Veen noted with deep anxiety that the tongue was swollen, for the boy had been given neither food nor drink since early morning.

Concealing his anxiety, Van der Veen said, "Henricus, again I command you to tell me concerning your father."

The boy opened his eyes with difficulty and turned them a moment on the Shout Fiscal and moved his head a little aside.

Rutgert, who had approached as near his father as he dared, choked with sobs at the sight.

The Shout Fiscal hesitated a moment, looking at the boy. Then he glanced at his own son behind him and said abruptly

to a woman near by, "My good vrouw, will you kindly go to the house and bring a bowl of milk? When it comes," he went on to the guard, "do you release the boy's head and make him drink."

A murmur of approbation arose from the crowd. Van der Veen turned to a man standing near and said sternly, "Jan, attend to your duty. One would not suspect you to be on guard. Look yonder!" pointing out on the bay.

In the distance, approaching the town, could be seen a white speck which the Shout's keen eyes had discovered to be a sail.

"Do you watch the boat and see who lands," he said to Jan as he started for the fort.

Rutgert turned his back on Henricus' sufferings and walked down to the water's edge. His heart leaped at the sight of the sail. That was the route Captain de Vries always took. If only it were he—!

The boy stood near the only landing place in the town, a long narrow plank wharf which projected out into the bay. Toward this wharf the boat was being steered.

Nearer and nearer came the little craft until Rutgert with a thrill of joy recognized in the man standing at the rudder Captain de Vries. He ran to the very end of the wharf where he saw the Captain intended to land.

"Ho, there!" cried de Vries, as he came within shouting distance. "What means this crowd and who is yonder in the stocks? And, you, younker, what is the meaning of such red eyes? For once you are without Henricus. I have never seen the one without the other yet. This is a rare sight."

As he spoke the Captain stepped from his boat and bade one of the servants who accompanied him make it fast. He then shook Rutgert's arm in a good-natured way.

"Where is your tongue, Rutgert? It has never been slow to wag before. Answer me! Who is in the stocks yonder?"

Rutgert found his voice. "And may it please you, Captain de Vries, 'tis Henricus."

"Well, it does not please me," roared the Captain in a voice which might almost have been heard at the fort. "Is New Amsterdam gone mad? What is that younker doing in the stocks?"

Jan, the watchman, with a number of others had hastened down to the wharf and was looking suspiciously at the two servants bearing from the boat a large covered basket. They seemed to think that Pelgrum Clocq might be concealed within.

At the Captain's question, they all answered at once, "He aided his father—" "He tells nothing—" "A brave boy—" "Obstinate—"

"What can I get out of this babel?" shouted de Vries irritably. "You, Rutgert, tell me the truth."

"Yesterday my father caught Henricus," replied Rutgert

steadily, "and he has spent all this day in the stocks because he will not tell where his father is."

"Saint Nicholas!" raged the Captain, making his way through the crowd closely followed by Rutgert. "Now this passes my patience. It's the best thing that has occurred in this town for many a long day that Clocq could not be found, as you shall see. Take the youngster out of those holes at once."

No one made a move in that direction.

"I am acting according to orders, sir," replied the guard. "I cannot obey you." But he said it with fear, for the Captain was a formidable commander.

"Where is the Shout Fiscal," the latter roared again shaking Rutgert's arm.

"My father has gone with the rest of the council to the fort," answered the boy.

"Just where I am going, and so is Henricus. Release the boy, I say," to the guard.

"Not without orders, sir," said the guard firmly.

"Orders, blockhead," cried de Vries, who often forgot he was no longer in command, "I give you orders. Is that not enough?"

The guard shook his head while the crowd stood breathless and silent around. Captain de Vries' round face turned purple.

"I tell you this boy deserves the stocks no more than I. His father is no thief. Here am I on my way to the fort to prove that, and I tell you, stupid, I will take this lad along. Release him, I say, or I'll tear down the stocks and gibbet."

But the last sentence was lost in the prolonged shout which arose from the crowd. Henricus, somewhat revived by the drink of milk that he had been forced to take, raised his eyes to Captain de Vries and tried to speak. The guard, assisted by eager hands, released the boy, and a wondering crowd followed the captain to the fort.

The corpulent de Vries, half carrying, half leading Henricus, who was supported on the other side by Rutgert, hurried so rapidly up to the fort and into the council chamber, that he entered the presence of Stuyvesant nearly breathless.

The latter sat beside a table near a great fire-place. A heavy frown rested on his stern face as he surveyed the members of his council. Impatiently he shuffled his feet on the sanded floor or rubbed his knees as a rheumatic pain twinged the nerves.

Clocq's hammer lay, where he had left it, on a projecting stone over the boards which were intended to interrupt the draft between the door and the fire-place, but which, judging from the frequency with which His Worshipful Honor rubbed his knee, did not wholly accomplish their mission.

The Schepens and Burgomasters sat close about the Director,

listening to the Shout Fiscal's report as to Henricus' obstinacy, which tale he had but begun when the disorderly throng, with de Vries at their head, unceremoniously invaded the chamber.

In amazement, the Shout Fiscal sprang to his feet at the sight of his small prisoner whom he had left in the stocks.

"What means this?" cried Stuyvesant, angrily.

The Captain, breathless, made no reply. He advanced, puffing and blowing, to the table, dragging Henricus and motioning the servants to set the basket before the Director. At his heels came the agitated crowd filling up the council chamber and even overflowing into the parade ground of the fort.

"And who dared to release that boy?" exclaimed the Fiscal, pointing sternly at the shrinking boy.

"By my orders it was done," gasped Captain de Vries.

With much ado, the Captain pulled off the basket's cover and laid out piece by piece, before the astonished Stuyvesant, his massive stolen plate. When it was actually before him, the crowd sent up another shout which was echoed out in the fort.

"Where did you get it? How came you to bring it?" questioned Stuyvesant in bewilderment.

Captain de Vries seated himself and drew Henricus to him. Seating the pale lad on his knee the Captain said tenderly, "Well, boy, your father is no thief."

"I knew that. I knew that," said the boy thickly.

"But the silver, Captain, where did you get it?" cried Stuyvesant, impatiently.

"Only let me get a breath and you shall learn," cried de Vries.

A man at the door repeated every word said in the council room and the sentences were passed from one to another, and so to the people out in the fort.

Until the Captain should choose to speak, Stuyvesant must wait. There was one man in the settlements over whom the General had no control. In the meantime, the silver was being curiously inspected. As Stuyvesant raised piece after piece, he said, "It is all here save—"

"The bowl which was found in Clocq's possession," interrupted de Vries, "and which Clocq never stole. Hark ye, Stuyvesant," he continued, using, as usual, scant ceremony with the Director, "yesterday about this time, who should appear in the slaves' quarters but the half-breed knave and fool whom I brought a prisoner from the West Indies six years back."

"Ha!" exclaimed Stuyvesant, "The one I sent out of the settlement."

"Yes, after you had given him a fine taste of the lash," assented de Vries. "He had been wandering around Fort Orange until, as ill luck would have it, he got back to Breuckelen. He went, as I have said, to the servants' quarters, and there he

demanded rum. He offered in payment your silver tankard. Too much rum loosened his tongue and what he told was carried to me. He is the thief."

"That scoundrel?" cried Stuyvesant, "That half-witted knave?"

"Not so half-witted," returned de Vries, "as not to hate you for the whip you caused to be laid on his back, nor so much a scoundrel as to forget Clocq, the man who befriended him and gave him shelter until he could heal the wounds made by the lash. He revenged himself on you by taking the plate, and rewarded Pelgrum Clocq by sharing the spoils with him—when Clocq was away from home. The rascal concealed the bowl in Clocq's bed so that no one should find it, save poor Pelgrum himself."

"When I have the rascal—" fumed Stuyvesant.

"You have the silver," interrupted the Captain grimly, "and I have the thief. 'Tis a fair exchange."

The Captain paused and looked around. Rutgert stood back of his chair. Reaching around, de Vries pulled the boy beside him and smiled. "Well, younker, it is a brave hand you put to the quill. I could spell out each word of your letter. The Dominie did not see me this week but sent it over to the manor by special messenger at sun-up this morning."

Rutgert flushed with pleasure at the Captain's words, and was greatly embarrassed at being the target for so many eyes. Then he glanced timidly at his father. The Shout Fiscal was looking at him with a puzzled but not displeased expression.

Emboldened by the look, Rutgert whispered to Henricus, "I did put the bread and cheese on the ledge for you and not for the birds."

Then the Director spoke. He knocked with his wooden leg against the table to insure silence. "It's a great mistake we have made," he said to his council, "but we may thank God it is not too late to mend that mistake."

Then to the Shout he said significantly, "It is well we did not make another mistake in regard to your son. Our next care is to bring Pelgrum here. Henricus, where is your father?"

"Is my father now free, entirely free?" asked Henricus slowly.

He began his question in a weak voice, and then, summoning all his strength, spoke loudly as if he wished all in the room to hear.

"As free as you now are," said Stuyvesant. "And not only that," continued the Director, who could be generous as he was often unjust, "but the reward of three hundred beavers' skins shall be yours, younker, when you bring your father before me."

There was a murmur of approbation from the people.

"I will bring him tomorrow," said Henricus.

"What! Is he so far away?" asked de Vries in disappointment.

"No, no, he is quite near, but—"

At these words ejaculations arose on every side from men who had searched the village until, as they said, every mole which turned up the sod was known to them.

Stuyvesant arose, and placing both hands on the table leaned forward and looked keenly at Henricus. "But what?" he asked.

"If it please your Worshipful Highness, I would rather not bring my father before you until tomorrow," and Henricus' eyes fell before the Director's gaze. "Surely tomorrow may be time enough."

"Now, by Saint Nicholas, younker," declared the Captain, "I shall see your father before I return to Breuckelen tonight. Come! Out with it!" Then, as Henricus continued to hang his head, "Why do you wish to put it off?"

"I fear your displeasure," said Henricus to Stuyvesant.

"You need fear nothing," said the Director earnestly. "We are right glad that this has come out as it has. We would all now see Pelgrum Clocq."

"Yes, yes," came from the people.

"I was obliged to find a place where no one would think of searching and where I could get out to get food—"

"Yes."

"And I knew only one such place in New Amsterdam."

"And that was—" prompted Stuyvesant, while the crowd swayed eagerly forward.

"In your own house."

"What!" shouted Stuyvesant. "Here? In this house? Not possible!"

"Boy, your head is clearer than some generals'," cried Captain de Vries, while the people crowded closer in their excitement.

"Where is he?" demanded Stuyvesant, beating the silver bands of his wooden leg for emphasis.

"First let me explain," faltered Henricus, looking with alarm at the agitated Director.

De Vries drew the boy closer to him, and with this protection Henricus continued in broken sentences: "I knew it would occur to no one to search your house. Of course—it is an insecure place—but it was the best we could do—the room is not often used—there is the window—"

Henricus paused and gasped. He looked imploringly at the Director, whose rugged features were softening with interest and kindness. The Captain's arm also reassured the boy, who raised his head and suddenly called out, "Father."

It was an unexpected move. Schepens and Burgomasters rose in bewilderment. The people looked from ceiling to floor as though Pelgrum Clocq might fall from the one or rise from the other. But nothing so miraculous occurred. There was a noise

behind the astonished Director, a scratching sound which caused him to wheel suddenly in time to see the board screen in front of the fire-place move slowly out and the carpenter, soot-stained, his clothes torn and his face thin, stooped beneath the great stones projecting above the hearth, and stood before them.

The effect was overpowering. Every one was dazed, and speechless. A spell seemed to hold the people. Henricus would have gone to his father but the Captain unconsciously held him in his vise-like arm.

Clocq, ever a bashful man, hung his head in embarrassment and swayed weakly. Rutgert made his way to the carpenter's side, his black eyes glowing and his face flushed. His voice rang out in boyish triumph, "I knew, Mynheer Clocq, that you did not take the plate. I knew it because you are Henricus' father."

Clocq, more confused than ever, turned, reached for his hammer mechanically and muttered apologetically to Stuyvesant: "There is still between the boards a crack which makes a draft."

The spell was broken. The Director, leaning on the table, burst into such a laugh as he seldom gave. The Captain released Henricus and joined the others crowding about Clocq. When the latter saw de Vries he looked up into the tall Captain's face and began uncertainly, "I thank—" but he could get no further.

The bluff old soldier brought his hand down with hearty good will on Clocq's shoulder and exclaimed, "Save your thanks for the youngster, Rutgert, here. Had it not been for the letter he sent by Dominie Megapolensis, I should have known nothing of your straits and should not have crossed the Hellegat until three days hence and by that time, man, where might you have been?"

Then there arose a mighty cheer for the Shout Fiscal's son, a cheer which was taken up by the people who could not get into the chamber but contented themselves with a partial report of the proceedings second-hand. And when they had cheered for Rutgert and the Captain, and Henricus and Clocq, they set up a great shout for Stuyvesant, their stern Director General, who had shown himself both just and generous in the outcome of the strange affair.



Here was even a better opening than Patsy had hoped for to broach a new subject.

THE CORN-SONG.

BY JOHN G. WHITTIER.

Heap high the farmer's wintry hoard!

Heap high the golden corn!

No richer gift has Autumn poured
From out her lavish horn!

Let other lands, exulting, glean

The apple from the pine,

The orange from its glossy green,
The cluster from the vine;

We better love the hardy gift

Our rugged vales bestow,

To cheer us when the storm shall drift
Our harvest-fields with snow.

Through vales of grass and meads of flowers

Our plows their furrows made,

While on the hills the sun and showers
Of changeful April played.

We dropped the seed o'er hill and plain,

Beneath the sun of May,

And frightened from our sprouting grain
The robber crows away.

All through the long, bright days of June

Its leaves grew green and fair,

And waved in hot midsummer's noon
Its soft and yellow hair.

And now, with autumn's moonlit eves,

Its harvest-time has come,

We pluck away the frosted leaves,
And bear the treasure home.

There, when the snows about us drift,

And winter winds are cold,

Fair hands the broken grain shall sift,
And knead its meal of gold.

Let rapid idlers lol in silk

Around their costly board;

Give us the bowl of samp and milk,
By homespun beauty poured!

Where'er the wide old kitchen hearth

Sends up its smoky curls,

Who will not thank the kindly earth,
And bless our farmer girls!

Then shame on all the proud and vain,

Whose folly laughs to scorn

The blessings of our hardy grain,
Our wealth of golden corn!

Let earth withhold her goodly root,

Let mildew blight the rye,

Give to the worm the orchard's fruit,
The wheat-field to the fly;

But let the good old crop adorn

The hills our fathers trod;

Still let us, for his golden corn,
Send up our thanks to God!

Patsey's Progress.

By Annabelle Williams.

CHAPTER I.

Choosing a Career.

Whatever sins lay at Isaac Lee's door, race suicide was not among them. Five lusty, ragged children romped in his door-yard, a half-grown girl and boy hung over the rickety gate. Inside the small box house Mrs. Lee had just come into the living-room with the youngest of her brood in her arms, and found Patsey, the eldest, patching Hiram's blue cotton pants.

Patsey's face, always thoughtful, was more so than usual. The little pucker in her young forehead had come from helping her parents in the strenuous effort to bring ends together. There were eight mouths to feed from the product of fifty acres of clayey soil. A hard sum in division. Patsey's efficiency in figures came in well.

"Can't you git them pants done, Patsey? Hiram's bound to have 'em. Them he has on is most off'n him."

Mrs. Lee was a little woman with a peevish little voice. Her gray calico wrapper was decorated with rents.

"Most done, mother" (the rest of the children said "Pa" and "Ma"). Patsey's fingers quickened, but she returned to an abstracted silence which annoyed her mother, who liked a listener to her complaints.

"What air you studyin' about, Patsey? Your pa's socks'll have to be darned when you git through with them pants."

The girl did not speak at once. Would her mother understand her thoughts? If Mrs. Lee had once had dreams of great things for her children poverty had obliterated them. Physical needs harassed her, and if she could have given them enough of shelter and clothes and food she would think of nothing else; but Patsey longed for the higher and beautiful things of life. All the hunger of her starved existence seemed to gather force, and she yearned with a greater intensity than usual this morning.

"Tomorrow's my birthday, and I'm eighteen years old," she said sadly. Eighteen seemed like advancing toward age to Patsey.

"I reckon it is, but I'd forgot all about it. We might git some apples from Mr. Smith to make some pies, but there ain't any sugar and the hens has stopped layin'. It looks like we git harder up every day," and Mrs. Lee sighed deeply.

Here was even a better opening than Patsey had hoped for to broach a new subject.

"I've been thinking," she said, "that I might teach this fall. I'm old enough now, and it would help some. I could buy the children clothes and clothe myself, and—" Patsey checked herself in saying buy books.

"Teach school!" repeated her mother, in surprise and some disapproval, for Patsey's absence would leave all the care of the children on her. "You never been off to school nowhere. You reck'n you know enough in books?"

"I can try," said Patsey. "We never know what we can do till we try. Miss Kamp told me last year she thought I could get a certificate."

Miss Kamp was Patsey's former teacher, and her ideal of womanhood, to which day by day she endeavored to grow. But she was not concerned only with herself. She wanted the home to be like Miss Kamp's, of which she had had occasional glimpses.

A few months each year of country schooling had been Patsey's only opportunities for erudition; but looking back she could count few golden moments lost in the little schoolroom, and many gained by study in her own room at night, with a curtained door, for her father disapproved of such extravagance with oil.

Mr. Lee was a cautious man, taking complacently what came to him, but shrinking timidly from trading talents lest in the transaction he come out loser. The welfare of his children disturbed his mind in the same degree as did the welfare of his pigs. He would feed and shelter them now; later they could root for themselves.

At least her mother understood Patsey better than her father, and she undertook to speak to him.

"Patsey wants to teach school, Pa," she said at the dinner table.

He swallowed the enormous bite of cabbage he had conveyed to his mouth with his knife, and closed his eyes before he answered. In his mind's eye he saw a bright silver dollar—the examination fee.

"You'd better not do it, Patsey. You might git a cerstificate and you mightn't—and then if you git the cerstificate you mightn't git a school. You see it would be all a risk," he argued.

But Patsey was deaf to objections. She was a young American; she had imbibed the spirit of her century, and she had a carefully hoarded dollar, her earnings in the blackberry patch. When this fact was made known Mr. Lee acquiesced and she was left to do as she pleased.

The examination was to be in July. In preparation Patsey faithfully reviewed her text books. She could not wait for spare time, but studied while washing dishes, churning and sewing seams, and at night slept with the books under her pillow. But

notwithstanding her vigilance examination day came almost before she was aware.

Dick was hitched to the rattling road cart and Jerry drove her to the county seat.

The morning was young and fresh with dew when they left home; the birds chirped gleefully to cheer her on her way; but Patsey was too engrossed to notice. Of a sudden she was growing timid. At home she could think of the examination calmly, but now she faltered. This was the foundation of her hopes for the future, and if she should fail! Hope and fear fought desperately in her fluttering little bosom, and fear predominated on reaching the place of conflict.

The examination was in progress when she entered the room. Thirty-six would-be teachers, some with glasses, some with concealed rabbit feet for luck, worked assiduously at their tasks, but looked up as Patsey hesitated in the doorway with her heart in her throat. She was trembling from head to foot, her ambition had taken flight and she was ready to follow it, when the superintendent stepped from behind his table and conducted her to a desk in the rear of the room.

"Have you reached the requisite age for teaching?" he inquired, with a glance at the little figure and childish face.

"I'm eighteen," she replied.

"Very well; but you are ten minutes late, so you will have to hurry with this first subject;" and he brought her a list of questions on "Composition."

She seized the paper nervously and looked over it.

"What is diction? What is perspicuity? What is colloquialism?" made chaos of her brain and the rest was a blur before her eyes.

She leaned over her desk and buried her face despairingly in her hands for a few minutes, but time was pressing and passing. Something must be done. She made a heroic attempt to control her shattered nerves and do some rational thinking.

After answering the questions, a short essay was to be written on "A Happy Event," which it seemed like irony in the committee to suggest just now.

One of the examiners, with kind hazel eyes, noticing the despondency of Patsey's attitude, walked down the aisle.

"How is composition coming on?" he asked kindly.

"Oh, I don't know. I've tried to answer the questions," she answered dejectedly.

He glanced over her paper.

"Don't worry. You are getting on all right. You have answered enough to pass. Isn't it warm here? You had better move to the next desk." Patsey hadn't noticed the sun streaming over her.

He arranged her comfortably at another desk, and with a few more encouraging words passed on. Her nerves were soothed and she was able to set to work more deliberately.

When the examination was over the superintendent handed her a third-grade certificate. She had decided beforehand on a first-grade, but she did not mention this. She took the third gratefully and went home.

. . .

Mr. Lee's fears were not without grounds. Securing a certificate is only the initiative to a country school teacher's many troubles, as Patsey soon realized. "The woods were full of teachers," one trustee said, and older and more experienced ones were preferred.

However faint-hearted, with a persistency akin to ability she sent out application after application, and took long drives through the country. But the time was near for the fall term of the public schools to begin, and Patsey had no school.

"Just as I expected," observed her father. Mr. Lee was very feminine in some respects. Mrs. Lee was in a state of perturbation, vacillating between praise and blame.

But her father's lack of faith, her mother's fretfulness and the gloomy family prospects only fired Patsey's determination. She would not give up until she knew that every school in the county was supplied with a teacher, and she wrote to the Superintendent to know if it was the case. In a few days a reply came:

"My dear Miss Lee:—The school at Goose Creek is still in need of a teacher. H. T. Clodfelter is chairman of the board. This is the only school left of which I have any knowledge. Wishing you success, I am

Yours very truly,

W. M. Ryland, Co. Supt."

Goose Creek was twelve miles away, hidden among the knobs, but Patsey felt that too much depended upon its possession to trust to a written application. She must go herself.

"May I take Dick and the cart tomorrow, father?" she asked.

"You can take 'em, Patsey, but it seems to me you've tried enough to know it ain't no use," was Mr. Lee's encouraging permission.

So Patsey started, with Hiram for a companion. They traveled the main pike four miles, then turned westward, twisted around curves, climbed over knobs and passed through valleys, asking direction and distance of everyone they met. The distance shortened with Dick's shadow, and at noon they came upon an oldish man, digging potatoes near the roadside.

"Will you please direct me to Mr. Clodfelter's, chairman of

the school board?" said Patsey, drawing the reins and bringing Dick to a standstill.

The old man pushed his flappy straw hat farther back on his head and looked up. "Well, I reckon so. You want to go there?"

"Yes, sir," answered Patsey briefly, embarrassed by the quiz-zical expression of his sunbrowned face, and having no desire to linger.

"You see that bunch or thicket acrost to the right yonder?" he said, indicating with his left hand. "He lives just behind that. You go down the road a piece and turn in at the first gate on the left-hand side, then go through that cornfield and the thicket and there's the house. You're a teacher, I reckon, wanting the school," he concluded, eyeing her critically.

"Yes, sir, I'm a teacher," she admitted timidly. "Do you know if the school has been taken?"

"If it has I ain't heerd of it, and I reckon I'd be right liable to, bein' I'm the cheerman." His eyes twinkled mischievously at Patsey's expression of surprise.

"Then you are Mr. Clodfelter," she stammered.

"That was my pa's name and I reckon it's mine too."

She was becoming more and more confused by his circumlocution, and forgetting the dignity of her position said hurriedly:

"I want to teach your school, please, if you haven't any teacher."

"Well, not many does, and I 'low you won't this time next year if you git it. What's yer name?"

Reminded of proprieties, Patsey drew up a little and said with a dignified tone:

"I am Miss Lee of Palestine. Mr. Ryland recommended this school to me, and I drove over to put in my application."

"Umph. It's the first recommendation it ever got. Air you any kin to the Lees on the other side of the crick?"

"I think not."

"Have you ever taught?"

"No, sir," she answered, her spirits sinking.

The old man nodded his head thoughtfully.

"We most generally git experienced teachers, but I reckon if you don't teach yer fust one you ain't apt to teach yer second. Got a stifficate?"

"Yes, sir, I have it with me;" but she hoped in her heart that he would not have her produce it.

"Well, I don't see no use in wastin' more words. It's gittin' time the school was beginnin' anyway, and you air the fust that's been along to git it. Ye look purty young, but I reckon if ye can't hold them youngsters down we kin help you."

"Is the school hard to manage?" asked Patsey.

"We've got about the meanest set of children in the county.

Them Foltz boys is what you'd call a mortal terror. Bob's a great big boy about eighteen years old, and sneakin' as a snake. Henry's a few years younger but he ain't much better. Miss Johnson had a time with 'em. Howsomever, I reck'n you'll git along all right. You kin jest drive by Sippy's and Mentzer's and tell 'em I said for you to have the school. It'll go."

"But won't you have to call the Board together for the appointment?" Patsey had read the Common School law, and was anxious to have all proceedings legal.

"'Tain't necessary. We don't generally do it, and my pertaters air sunburnin' so I got to git 'em out 'er the ground. I'sh pertaters and gold's about the same this year. How's pertaters in your country?"

"Not very good. I think it's so everywhere."

"Yes, too much rain in the spring, and we got 'em planted too late. You jest tell Sippy and Mentzer about the school. It'll be all right."

Patsey was glad to get away from the old gentleman's talk and the queer little twinkle in his eye that suggested derision, and made her ill at ease. She slapped Dick with the reins and started, when a shout came from behind. "Hi! hi! wait!" They looked back. "Drive over to my house and git your dinners," said Mr. Clodfelter hospitably.

"Let's go," whispered Hiram; but Patsey, with thanks, explained that they had their lunch with them; and at last they were allowed to depart in search of the other members of the honorable board.

Hiram ate most of the lunch, for musing on the depravity of Goose Creek children had destroyed Patsey's appetite. She was too inexperienced to allow for a margin to the trustee's statements, and the joy of success was tinged with the dread of failure.

They were further delayed by Hiram's tumbling into the creek when he endeavored to wade it (the juvenile Lees were bound to come to grief somehow), and they had to wait while his clothes dried a little in the sun. But at last they interviewed Mr. Sippy and Mr. Mentzer.

Mr. Clodfelter's confidence in his word had not been too great. The other gentlemen endorsed his appointment as if it were compulsory, and at three o'clock Patsey left the valley, the prospective mistress of Goose Creek school.

CHAPTER II.

Goose Creek.

Patsey spent the week which intervened before the beginning of her work in storing away the knowledge of the solution of the Foltz Brothers problem.

She borrowed and read White's School Management from beginning to end, and so confident was she in her reinforcement that despair gave way again to hope and glad anticipation of her work. When the eventful morning came she was on the scene early, in her best pink calico dress, with its length extended by a ruffle of new and deeper goods.

A number of children were gathered around the door awaiting the arrival of the new teacher. They huddled closer together as Patsey approached, gave them a bright good morning and passed into the school-room.

This was a sight to behold; benches, bucket, broom, charcoal and ashes lay in a conglomerated heap in the middle of the floor, and the blackboard was covered with unsteady scrawling. She considered how to bring it into a habitable condition, and decided to call some of the larger boys to her assistance.

From his superior height Patsey had recognized Bobby Foltz instantly, and resolved on a secret treaty of peace. Her position as deputy mother in the family had given her some experience in managing boys, and Mr. White's treatise placed a stamp on it.

"You are the young man of our school," she said, "and I'll have to make you my assistant. Won't you please arrange those benches for me?"

Bobby stared at her in unconcealed astonishment. She called him a man! He glanced around to make sure there was no other tall fellow near, then went to work with a vim.

"It's terribly messed up in here," he said. "Some drunk men stayed here t'other night and done it."

"It's too bad. Wasn't the door locked?" asked the new teacher, glad to get into a conversation.

"Ain't no use to lock the door. The winder lights is all out, and anybody can climb in," he answered. Patsey counted six panes of glass in four windows.

"We'll have to have them put in before cold weather comes," she said as she took the broom to sweep.

"I don't know as it's any use," he said bluntly. "Every year they're put in, and broke before it's time to begin the next time." He might have named one of the destroyers, but he was silent; he began to regret they were out.

At last some order was restored, Miss Patsey rang the bell, and twenty-five children, large and small, bright and stupid, clean and dirty, filed through the door and scrambled noisily for their

former seats. The new teacher waited patiently for a calm, then proceeded with the enrollment and classification. Henry Foltz proved to be a demure looking boy of fifteen, with large brown freckles showered over his face and stiff brown hair which might have had several combings during his life-time. He showed no inclination to return Patsey's advances toward friendliness.

The daily program upon which Patsey had worked studiously was taken up by the children with a first-day enthusiasm, and all began studying in an undertone, till a low humming noise filled the room.

Presently she called up the primer class, headed by little Becky Duckett; but Becky was shy and refused to come. The new teacher was trying to decide whether Mr. White would have advised her to insist, when Jimmy Mutzer, who had a brand new first reader, cried out: "Say, teacher, I know mine. Lemme say it now."

"Well, Jimmy, we'll let Becky study hers longer."

Jimmy, with a boastful air, marched up and repeated his lesson verbatim. Patsey then wrote the words he had spelt on the board, and Jimmy recognized each at once. Patsey felt encouraged in her work, and overlooked his swagger for the present.

As she stood at the board with her back to the room, suddenly something struck her sharply between the shoulders, and turning she saw a piece of dirt dauber's nest at her feet. She surveyed the room. All heads were bent over books; Henry especially was very studious, and moving his lips rapidly. The thing might have fallen from the ceiling, and she decided to take no further notice of it.

At recess Patsey approached Bobby Foltz, who was puffing away at a cigarette at the corner of the house.

"Will you sharpen my pencil? You have a good knife," she said. He prided himself on this possession and willingly consented.

"Won't you please throw that cigarette away, Bobby?" she asked kindly as he gave her back the pencil. "Smoking is so injurious, I cannot have it on the playground."

"It ain't hurt me, and I've smoked since I was knee high to a duck," he protested.

"But it will hurt you after a while, and you see if you use tobacco the smaller boys might imitate you. I'm sure you don't want to have a bad influence over the others."

Bobby's face had a gleam of rebellion. He took several more puffs undecidedly; but the appeal in Patsey's eyes was strong, and he threw the cigarette to the ground, stalking off as if ashamed.

"Thank you," said Patsey to his back.

Little John Green hurried up, his eyes like full moons, and stammered: "M-miss P-patsey! S-s-sammy's—er—" Before he could finish she heard the rattle of stones which Sammy Cling-

ingpeale was throwing against the house as fast as they could leave his chubby hands.

Sammy was a very little boy, and the new teacher persuaded him to change his amusement, but judged it wise not to inflict any punishment at present.

The Clingingpeale house, though two miles from the school, was the only one in the community with space for an extra inmate, so Patsey, like her predecessor, was to resort there for board and night shelter. At four o'clock the school was dismissed and she accompanied the Clingingpeale children home. Billy walked on in front with her little black valise, and Ricky, a little girl of ten, stayed behind to keep her company. She was very communicative, giving the family record from the family Bible, with a history of Sammy's misdemeanors and the baby's bumps.

Mrs. Clingingpeale, in a clean checked apron, which illy hid the dirt beneath, met them at the door.

"This is the new teacher," she said, smiling and interrupting Patsey's attempt at introduction. "Come in and take off your bonnet. You must be well-nigh frazzled out after that walk. It allus tires the teacher at first, but Miss Johnson said she got used to it 'fore school was over. Just have a cheer and I'll run to the spring and fetch a fresh bucket of water."

Patsey protested, but she was off with the bucket, leaving Ricky in charge of the baby on the floor, who set up a piteous wail at sight of the stranger.

"Hursh up," said Ricky, shaking him violently. "Hursh up, or I'll spank you good." But the noise only increased.

"I wisht Ma'd hurry," complained Ricky, angrily. "If there's anyone down there she can talk to she'll stay all day."

But for once, though there was a neighbor at the spring, Mrs. Clingingpeale only took time to eulogize the beauty of her new boarder, and returned to the house at once. She brought Patsey a drink in a smoked tin cup, for which she apologized; then taking up the baby she sat down in a straight chair and soothed his sobs into slumber. Ricky placed herself on the floor at Patsey's feet.

"How did you git on at school?" Mrs. Clingingpeale asked, as soon as a lull presented itself.

"Very nicely, thank you," replied Patsey, remembering it is always best to put the good side up.

"There's a right bad set over there; still I reck'n they ain't much worse than they are anywhere else. It jest seems the nature of children to be bad." Mrs. Clingingpeale looked at hers hopelessly.

"Ma," said Ricky, as if to confirm her opinion, "Sammy jest lammed rocks agin the schoolhouse."

Patsey realized she would have to deal with troubles out of school as well as in.

"Oh, well, Ricky, this was Sammy's first day at school. He'll know better tomorrow," she said.

"And Henry Foltz made faces at you behind his books," continued Ricky, unabashed.

"Ricky, go and feed them chickens," commanded her mother.

* * *

While her landlady was preparing supper Patsey strolled into the little woods in front of the house and sat down on a log. Her head throbbed painfully from the heat and strain of the day, and the confusion of the house made it worse. She felt miserable and despondent. Everything was so different from what she had expected and for which she longed. Her school was so defective. The children were so unlovable, and yet her responsibility was so great. If they had better homes and training, she thought, it would be different. But the "if" was the stumbling block. Her hopes of success in her work were crumbling when Mrs. Clingingpeale came to the door and announced supper.

Patsey started through the kitchen doorway, but was retarded in her progress by Billy, the eldest of the five Clingingpeale children, who was making a hurried flight with a piece of hot fried chicken, which he was dexterously transferring from one hand to the other, as the fingers of each were burned.

"Ma," called Ricky, the tell-tale. "Billy's got the biggest piece of chicken in the dish and run off with it."

Mrs. Clingingpeale threw the greasy dishcloth, which she had in her hand, on the corner of the table, and started in pursuit of the escaping rogue, when a scream from the baby arrested her intentions.

"In the name of peace!" she exclaimed, as she lifted the baby out of a stream of molasses; "how did the child git the 'lasses can?"

"I give it to him," admitted Ricky, "but he wanted it."

"Well, you can jest clean up that floor while I wash the baby. Miss Lee, you jest have a seat at the table and I'll be back in a minute." She disappeared through the back door, with the baby's head and feet dangling together under her arm.

Patsey was taking her seat at the table when a whimper was heard from Sammy, and Ricky remarked sharply, "Miss Leo, you're gittin' in Sammy's place."

"Am I? Never mind, another will do as well for me." Sammy slid under her as she rose from the chair.

Mrs. Clingingpeale reappeared with the sweetness washed from the baby, and replaced him in his high chair, at the table.

"Billy shan't have but one piece of chicken at school tomorrow,

shall he, Ma?" said Ricky, anxious that retribution should befall the transgressor.

"Ricky, do be quiet," pleaded her mother. "It seems like you'll want to run me crazy this evenin'. I wish yer pa would come on to the house. Looks like he never will let out from work."

The eventful supper over, and Ricky's chicken for lunch tomorrow carefully hidden on top of a cupboard, she conducted Patsey up a narrow flight of stairs which led from the kitchen to a little unfinished attic above the sitting-room.

At the head of the steps Patsey paused to look about. An object lesson in geography, she thought, might be effectively taught in this room to her class of beginners, for the whitewashed ceiling and walls made striking maps of oceanic currents, and the floor, with its evidence of recent scrubbing, contributed a remarkable illustration of the land and water surface.

The furniture of the room was scant, consisting of an unadorned drygoods box in one corner to answer the purpose of a washstand, a backless chair by the window, and a battered old bedstead.

Avoiding the water, Patsey crossed the floor, placed her valise on the chair and opened it. She took out some faded dresses and hung them on the wall, stacked a few papers and books on the corner of the box and sat down to read a school journal. But her mind was too tired to grasp the sense of what she read, and she could not have told whether it was *Methods of Teaching Spelling*, or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Her head was still aching and she went to bed early, but not to sleep. She began thinking of home, of her mother, of the thoughtless, uncaring children and how she wanted to help them, and how hard this would be in her present position. Her thoughts grew gloomier and her mind roved on and on, mixing and mingling with worries of the home and the school-room.

The round green moon came up from behind the knobs and smiled brightly in upon her, and stretched a thin white coverlet over the bed. She looked back at it and watched it travel the length of the window, removing the coverlet to the floor and at last dragging it over the window sill and withdrawing it entirely. But by that time tired-out Patsey had found refuge in sleep.

* * *

Fifty long hot days made up the semi-term; eight hours of each filled with aggravating experiences that might spoil the temper of the sunniest teacher, and bring premature lines on the smoothest brow; but Patsey worked on patiently and uncomplainingly, and no actual outburst occurred. The school was discussed whenever two or more neighbors came together, but the teacher did not have to call on the trustees for help, as they predicted, for some time.

Bobby Foltz began to conduct himself so as to gain the confidence of the community. Henry too showed signs of reformation, but it seemed that when his resolutions were strongest his old companion Satan was lurking near. It was after one of his best days, on which he had brought Patsey a large Winesap apple, that he yielded and fell.

Patsey had been delayed on the way to school by a casual meeting with Mr. Clodfelter, and barely escaped being late. She hurriedly collected the children and selected a short psalm for the morning's reading.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands," she began. A smile played around Henry's mouth. In another instant twenty-five voices repeating the second verse were drowned in the report of some hundred firecrackers resounding through the room, and Patsey, pale and trembling, sprang to her feet.

When the sound of the exploding fire-crackers had died away and the broken red hulls of the crackers lay scattered over the floor, the teacher decided that this noise had not been raised unto the Lord, and she sought the offender to mete out punishment.

"Who put those fire-crackers under my chair?" she demanded severely.

"I didn't," said Sammy Clingingpeale, eager to vindicate himself.

No other voice was heard, and the teacher still stood in the middle of the floor, scanning each boy's face accusingly. Henry's was sheltered behind his geography. The stillness was becoming painful. John Green could stand it no longer, and stuttered:

"We-well, I-I saw Henry with s-some f-fire spuibs this m-morning."

Satan still in evidence, Henry thrust his head from behind the book, and snapped savagely:

"He's a liar. I ain't seen any fire-crackers."

But circumstantial evidence pointed plainly to Henry, and for a double offence Patsey asked him to keep his seat at recess. But when the bell rang Henry bolted.

"Henry," called Patsey from the door. "You must return to the house at once for I want to speak to you."

The blood rushed to Henry's face, showing plainer the numerous freckles, and thrusting his hands to the bottom of his pockets he took a defiant stand, and called back:

"I ain't going to do it, and you might as well hush."

Patsey glanced at Bobby, who was standing near, to divine his position in the case. He mistook the glance for an appeal for succor and made a dash at the rebel to capture and bring him to justice, but Henry was too quick. Picking up a stick he warded Bobby off with a blow and made a victorious flight to the woods. The school-room was in a state of mutiny for the rest of that day, and Bobby carried a black eye for a week.

That afternoon Ricky was at home a few minutes in advance of her teacher, who, coming in unaware, heard her excited recital of the story to her mother in the kitchen:

"We had a time at school today. Henry Foltz put some fire-crackers under the teacher's chair and they blew her clean in the middle of the floor. It made the biggest noise! sounded like forty guns, and it pretty near scart me to death. Becky jumped and knocked my dinner off'n the bench and spilt every bit of it. And Henry called John Green a lie, and Miss Patsey tried to make him stay in and she couldn't; then Bobby tried to catch him and he knocked his head nearly off, and went to the woods and didn't come back no more. And I believe Miss Patsey's afraid of him," she added.

"Gracious sakes;" exclaimed Mrs. Clingingpeale. "It's a wonder he didn't put gunpowder and blow the last one of you into perdition. Miss Patsey ought to caught him and totally wore him out."

Patsey gave Ricky a quiet lecture on exaggeration, but that evening, after worrying and wondering what was best to do, she candidly admitted her inability to tatter the rebellious Henry, and walked over to Mr. Clodfelter's for a confidential consultation.

He was feeding pigs in the dust at the front gate and did not see her till she spoke.

"Go in, go in," he said cheerfully, then.

"Thank you, I haven't time," she replied gloomily, and leaning against the fence she began to relate her troubles.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Clodfelter, interrupting her. "Some of the children told me about it when they came by. You ought to caught him and lammed him good."

"But how could I, Mr. Clodfelter, when I couldn't get near him?"

"Well, don't worry. I'll come up there in the morning and we'll straighten him. He's got started crooked."

The next morning Henry was back at school and was invited to be present at a very exclusive meeting of the authorities, the proceedings of which were never made known to his companions. Whether he was actually straightened out or not is questionable, but Ricky told her mother just before school closed that she believed Henry got religion that morning Mr. Clodfelter was up there, for he'd been so good since didn't hardly anybody know him.

But now the fifty days were over, and one Saturday morning Mr. Clodfelter drove Patsey to town to receive material compensation for her labor. The thought of school cares vanished as the cashier put the notes and money into her hands, and she thought of their purchasing power. She walked down the street wondering if people knew how much money she had in that black purse. Fifty dollars! a dollar for every day she had taught. The

president's salary is small compared with Patsey's estimate of hers. Hidden behind a pile of calicoes in the drygoods store, she rearranged the wealth in her purse. Two five-dollar bills were put in a separate compartment for the payment for her meagre board at Mrs. Clingingpeale's. Ten dollars more was devoted to the day's shopping, at the end of which Mrs. Lee had a new dress and the little Lees were supplied with flannel petticoats, jean pants, yarn stockings and gingham aprons. She forgot herself, except for an absolutely necessary pair of shoes, in thinking how pleased her mother would be, and how comfortable the flannels would make the children.

Not daring to trust herself beyond the limits of the town with so much wealth, Patsey deposited the remaining thirty dollars in the bank, receiving a bank book, across the top of the first page of which was written "Patsey Lee, Creditor." Patsey looked at it a long time with the feelings of a capitalist.

Her plan had been to go home with her father, who had met her in town with Dick, but a storm was threatening, and Patsey sent the presents with her love and directions for distribution and making, and hurried back to Goose Creek.

The earth continued its rotations, and when fifty more suns had shone over the knobs school came to a close.

The event was signalized by visits from parents and the board, recitations by the pupils, and two large boxes of striped candy. To the children the candy was the principal feature of the afternoon, and recitations were rendered with a view to getting to it as soon as possible.

Henry and Billy, who were appointed waiters, passed it to the visitors grudgingly.

"I'd have more manners than to take it all," said Billy to a boy who had lost the term of school on account of the measles, but had recovered in time to attend on this festive day.

"I ain't!"

"Well, you're comin' so near there won't be none left."

As Billy moved on the other boy threw out his foot, and Billy came to the floor, scattering the candy, to which a number of children took the opportunity to help themselves.

When all backs were turned Bobby edged up to Patsey, and blushing deeply, proudly placed in her hand a little green bottle of cologne on which was pasted a bunch of printed violets.

"You kin keep this to remember me, Miss Patsey," he said in a low voice.

"Thank you, Bobby, but I shan't forget you. You have been such a good boy and helped me ever so much."

"You've helped me a sight, Miss Patsey," said Bobby seriously.

"I never did think much about being good till you come, and now I'm going to keep on trying."

As she packed her slender wardrobe that evening, Patsey reviewed her first school work with a feeling of disappointment. The children had not progressed as she had expected. No one, excepting Bobby, she felt had received any lasting good. And, though she was glad to be released from the school-room, going home would be no rest, for there was work enough there.

Mrs. Clingingpeale followed her to the gate the next morning, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"I don't know how I'm going to git along without you," she said. "The children are a heap better when you're here, and it jest seems like I can't make 'em mind."

* * *

As Patsey viewed the ladder to success, the next round was the Training School, situated at the county seat, and here, the following winter, she enrolled for a three months' course, at the end of which she hoped to obtain a better certificate and a more desirable position.

But strict economy had to be practiced to enable her to take even this short course. She found a fellow teacher whose bank account was on a par with her own, and together they rented a furnished room in a dilapidated building near the college grounds, and did their own housekeeping. Mrs. Lee occasionally sent Patsey a pound of butter, a few potatoes, a dozen of eggs or a loaf of bread, and her father developed energy enough to contribute a sack of flour.

The room was small and poorly furnished, but it was the best Patsey had ever occupied and she was satisfied and comfortable and wished the walls at home were papered like these. However, comfort was not what she sought just now. She had made her opportunity and knew the value of it.

Though responsibility had prematured Patsey into womanhood, isolation had in a measure prevented much knowledge of human nature, and the making of many new acquaintances was an education as well as the lessons she worked over morning, noon and night.

Miss Grey, her room-mate, was an experienced teacher, though still in the lower grades. She had a kind heart under a forbidding manner. The girl watched her sometimes and wondered—must teaching make one's face thin, cold and sallow, and take all the elasticity out of mind and body? Why, no! and she recalled others she met daily, Miss Storms, Miss Williams, and—there was the algebra teacher.

"Miss Grey," said Patsey timidly one evening as they sat by the stove waiting for the coffee to boil, "how long have you been teaching?"

"Twenty-five years. I began when I was almost a child, and ought to have been learning still myself. I've never had a chance

till lately to study up for a higher grade."

Patsy almost shuddered. Twenty-five years in the public schools! It seemed an eternity. And no advancement!

"Don't you get tired sometimes, Miss Grey?"

"I'm always tired," said Miss Grey with a sigh. Her manner was thawing; perhaps she was glad of sympathy. "Teaching is a poorly paid and wearing profession and I would not advise anyone to take it up."

The answer threw a chill over Patsey's ardor for teaching, but she would not be discouraged.

"I wish you could tell me some things from your experience. Do you always accomplish what you set out for at the beginning of the term, and at the end has each pupil done what you expected of him?"

"No," said Miss Grey. "I think it is the experience of every conscientious public school teacher to feel disappointed at the end of the session. We are set up as a social target when we enter a neighborhood, and the parents seem to think we correct their children for the pleasurable gratification of our vicious natures. If they would cooperate with us a little we might secure better and more lasting results."

Miss Grey became animated while delivering this speech, and Patsey listened as to an oracle. In a crude way she had felt it all herself.

The coffee in the pot boiled and overflowed the sides. Patsey got up and cleared the study table for supper.

Miss Grey on her side had taken a fancy to her room-mate. As time passed on she remarked that not only was the girl's mind expanding and her speech perfecting by a more careful enunciation, but her personal appearance was becoming more attractive each day.

Before the broken looking-glass in the corner her simple shirtwaists were given a neater set, her ribbons tied in a more artistic bow, her hair arranged in a more becoming manner.

In the school-room her diligence and aptness brought her into notice and favor with the teachers, who prophesied a bright future for her; and her unconscious beauty and sincere manners won admiration from her classmates.

Patsey's life was coloring and her confidence in the future strengthening.

"Miss Grey, did you get problem 3 on page 208?" she asked one afternoon. "I'm afraid the spring weather is stupefying my brains; I can't seem to do it, and I hate to have a bad lesson."

"It is a little hard. I saw you talking to Mr. Raymond after class. I thought it was about that. Conceited young man he is!"

"No, it was about something else," said Patsey, coloring. "I

don't consider him conceited. Thank you, Miss Grey, I believe I'll work it out by myself."

Miss Grey smiled to herself but said nothing, and noticed a careful toilet being made presently.

Early in the evening the bell rang, and Patsey went down at once to the door, though generally the landlady opened it. The dusk in the hall concealed a flush on her cheek, and the little nervousness of her hand as she opened the door.

A tall young man in a grey suit and with pleasant grey eyes stood there. It was the algebra teacher, but neither of them mentioned problem 3.

"Are you ready for our stroll?" he asked.

"Oh, yes." Patsey had her hat in her hand and now put it on.

"The evening is so lovely! I wonder—" she hesitated—"if I ought to ask Miss Grey. Perhaps she would like to go."

"Please don't!" he said hastily. "She wouldn't enjoy it anyhow. Come! where is your wrap?"

"I won't need any."

"Yes, you will. It will be cool later. Run and get it quick," he added laughingly.

"Your position makes you peremptory, Mr. Raymond. We are not in the class-room now," she retorted playfully. But she returned to the room for the faded cashmere shawl which she would rather not have had seen, and was relieved when Miss Grey did not ask where she was going.

"Which way?" he asked.

"Oh, to the park. I enjoy it there, and shall not have very much longer to go. The term will be over in a few more weeks."

"And you are sorry to go back to the country to help feed the pigs?" he said teasingly.

"Not to go back to the country so much, as to leave my work here and the nice people I have met."

"Miss Grey, for instance?"

"If you had taught twenty-five years perhaps you would be queer too. But I didn't mean her particularly."

"Who then, may I ask?"

"Oh—why, different people," said Patsey, confused.

To break a little silence that followed he resumed:

"Twenty-five years is a long time to teach, isn't it? For a woman, at least. You are not going to teach so long?"

"I hope not," she said with a little sigh. "Still one never knows. But it does seem dreary to be doing any work for twenty-five years."

He wished he could tell her that she should not spend her life at it, but his own prospects were too uncertain.

They passed through the park entrance. The walks were

thronged with pretty women and fine-looking men, well-dressed, laughing and talking.

"Let us find a seat on the west side. It is not so crowded over there. The music is unusually good tonight, and people are taking advantage of it. I never saw so many in the park before," he said, leading the way.

"Oh, isn't it lovely!" exclaimed Patsey in delight, looking at water falling from the fountains and the reflection of myriad lights in the basin below.

Presently they were seated in a remote corner.

"And you hate to leave because you like the people here," he said at length.

"Yes, they care for the same things I do. Books and music and art. I should like to stay here all the time."

There was a sadness in her voice, and the man looked down at the frail little creature by his side who could and must feel so much. He was older. He knew all the longings of a starved life, and he knew the difficulty that attended the striving to satisfy it.

"You are preparing to take another position in the fall, I believe."

"Yes, if I make my grade and can get one. There are so many ifs, you see."

"Must you teach? It is a hard life."

"Yes, I must; and I don't mind it if I can feel I am doing the children good."

"And do you?"

"Sometimes. Bobby said I did with him."

"Bobby was a big boy, I surmise."

"Yes, awfully big." She laughed.

"Then I am not surprised. Don't you want to know what I am going to do?"

"Yes. What are you?" she said, looking up at him frankly.

"I am going away tomorrow."

"Oh!" so full of regret; then she added, "But we can't let you. We would have no algebra teacher."

"You know I am only a substitute. The professor will be back tomorrow. I am considering the principalship of a graded school in Louisiana, and I must go down to see about it."

Patsey felt as if she could not speak for a few moments. Then she said quietly:

"I wish you success. Won't you ever come back to Kentucky?"

Prudence and poverty arrested the answer that arose from his heart. He would have liked to tell her that he would come as soon as he could if she would promise to wait for him. But he felt he had no right to bind her for an indefinite time.

"Some day, perhaps," he said. "If I am able I want to enter

the University of Chicago next summer to complete my course in mathematics. It will take two years."

"That will be nice," said Patsey, "and I am sure you will succeed. It seems to me a man can do anything he wants to, but a woman must do what she can."

"I am not so sure about that. I am almost ready to say sometimes that we are all children of circumstances." His tone was bitter. "But we do have examples to the contrary. If you really must go on teaching could you manage to go to the University also and take some special line of work? You would do better, for this is a day of specialties. To succeed we must focus our energies on one thing and master it."

"I should like so much to take English and literature, and I shall try; but it will be a long time before I am able, I'm afraid," she added with a sigh. "But isn't it time to go home now?"

As they were walking homeward, Ernest Raymond said: "Miss Patsey, I have your address at home. May I write to you sometimes?"

"Oh yes, I shall be glad to hear from you, Mr. Raymond."

"And you will answer, won't you?"

"Why yes." Patsey wondered if her voice showed her delight too plainly.

Then they came to the gate and said good-night. The next day was good-bye, but there was something to look forward to.

While Patsey was making the most of her time at the Training School, there had been fresh trouble at home. Squire Brown had declared that he must have the two hundred dollars which he had lent Jacob Lee on mortgage several years before, and the accumulated interest which brought it up to nearly three hundred.

"It was a risk to borrow it," Mr. Lee admitted to his wife, "but I had to have it just then to pay for a team, you know very well."

"And the horses is both dead. Mercy me!" said Mrs. Lee, beginning to cry; "to think shelter's the only thing we've got for the children, and to have it sold from over their heads!"

But she considerably decided that Patsey should not be troubled with this news till she came home. Mr. Brown consented to give one more extension when Patsey's prospects were explained to him.

CHAPTER III.

Round Pond.

This was a fresh spur to the girl, and when autumn came again she started, with an additional stock of learning and a better certificate, in quest of another school. Her search this time was not as protracted or strenuous as before, and she easily secured the principalship of Round Pond public school.

Round Pond was a little town consisting of a settlement on either side of the railroad, each backed by a church in the distance, defiantly facing each other across the rails. The railroad was not exactly an influence for peace, but it put a little space between them and so saved many encounters; for it was the proverbial custom of the inhabitant of Round Pond to look carefully after the affairs of his neighbors, and in the time that was left (if perchance there were any) to straighten his own. Thus matters became hopelessly entangled at times.

Mrs. Upshaw, on the eastern side, had by diplomatic management kept exempt from these troubles, and smiled benignly in every direction. To her Patsey was luckily sent for board.

"Oh, yes; I can keep you," she said, briskly, laying aside some sewing. "I always keep the teachers and transhunts and have ever since Pete died. I'll jest take Flossie and Isabel's bed down outer here and put it in the parlor, and Flossie can sleep with Docky and me, and you and Isabel can have that room all to yourselves. I was hopin' they'd get a lady to teach this fall, for it's more convenient to me to keep a lady than a man. The children's afraid to sleep in there by themselves, and we allays bring the bed back in here when the boarders leaves."

While Mrs. Upshaw proceeded to prepare for the accommodation of her boarder the latter sat still, resting from the fatigue of traveling.

"You see," continued Mrs. Upshaw, tearing the bed to pieces, "since Pete died I have to stir pretty peart to keep things together, and the folks allays lets me have all the boarders as comes to town. Then Isabel and me takes in all the sewin' we can get."

"Do you have many boarders?" asked Patsey, measuring the three small rooms and pantry in her mind.

"Oh, not many. Just the teachers and the transhunts that comes to sell things at the store most usually. There comes Isabel now. You and her can be right good friends. I b'lieve you are about the same size."

A beautiful girl of sixteen or seventeen came in quietly and laid her bonnet on the bed.

"Isabel, this here is the new teacher, Miss Lee. I'se jest tellin' her what good friends you could be."

Isabel blushingly acknowledged the introduction, then went to the assistance of her mother.

Although, as Patsey noticed in the removal, the sheets were not changed with the occupants and had evidently served well since laundry day, she slept soundly that night, and rose to find the Sabbath morning advancing toward noon.

"Well, it's a shame," remarked Mrs. Upshaw at the breakfast table, "the way we oversleep ourselves of Sunday mornin's, but it seems like there ain't nothin' so urgent to do, and sich a good chance to rest poor tired bones. Miss Patsey, do you belong to any church?"

"I'm a member of the Presbyterian church," answered Patsey, wondering why Mrs. Upshaw asked.

"Well, it's a streak of luck you are, for I don't know what would have become of you if you had been a Baptist or a Methodist or a Campbellite."

Patsey paused in her eating and looked at Mrs. Upshaw inquiringly.

"You see," she went on, "the Methodists and Baptists here spends most of their energy in abusin' each other, and what's left they join together agin the Campbellites over at Rock Springs."

"Oh dear!" said Patsey, alarmed. "I'm afraid I'll have trouble in my work if matters are in such a state."

"Oh, don't git scared. You'll jest have to be a little particular, is all. I was wonderin' which church we'd better go to this mornin'. Mr. Canfield and Piatt give you the school, and they're both Methodists, so I expect we'd better go to the Baptists, so folks won't think we are just goin' there to please them. Then we will go to the Methodist church tonight."

This seemed plausible, so they proceeded to the Baptist church. After service, Mrs. Upshaw took on herself to see that Patsey was introduced to every member of the congregation before they left.

"Mrs. Hatfield seemed to like you," she observed, as they sat at dinner, "and it would be well to stand in with the Hatfields 'cause they are pretty well to do and got four or five children in school."

"I shall try to stand in with everybody," said Patsey, laughing.

"I think you will; everybody seemed to like you this mornin'. Well, Isabel," she continued, reaching with her fork for a biscuit, "how you reckon John Seacamp come to bring Maud Rowell out to church today? Do you reckon him and Allie's had a quarrel? I know in reason they meant to marry 'cause she was makin' some quilts and comforts when I was up there, and kinder laughed when I pledged her about goin' to housekeepin'."

"Mamma, John has a right to go with any girl he wants to and Allie doesn't care," remonstrated Isabel.

"I ain't disputin' his right nor his privilege either, Isabel, but

I'd hate for John Seacamp to go back on as nice a girl as Allie Farney. Allie said she'd have some sewin' for us to do this week, and the money'll come in right handy to pay Docky's doctor bill."

Mrs. Upshaw having conducted her through Sunday satisfactorily, Patsey decided to trust to her steerage for a while in the tempestuous sea of Round Pond, so asked for and received some pointers before starting for school on Monday.

"You just go on like the Schoepfels and Canfields and all of them was on good terms," cautioned the landlady, standing in the doorway.

Patsey was glad to find the school children better disciplined than those she had had at Goose Creek, and that their parents seemed aware that cleanliness is conducive to health and morals; each little boy and girl stood forth with well laundered face and clean starched apron. 'Tis true the five Willowbys showed signs of discomfiture, and had a look of washed-for-the-occasion; but the Willowbys were the exception and not the rule.

During the first intermission a wail arose from the playground, and Patsey went out to learn the cause. She fully expected to find that Tom Billy Smith had knocked Jim Schoepfel clear across the yard in revenge for a latent grudge, but such was not the case. Susie Schoepfel was leaning against the corner of the house making the sounds which had reached her ear, while half a dozen other girls hovered about her offering condolence and expressing indignation. The boys were in conference further away.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Patsey, routed at conjectures.

A calm swept over the crowd and no one found speech.

"What is the matter with Susie?" again demanded Patsey.

"Why, Tom Billy kissed her right in the mouth," explained Roxy indignantly, smoothing Susie's hair.

"How came Tom Billy to do that?"

"I don't know. We's just playin' base together, and he caught her," answered another girl.

The defendant was brought to make his defense. His face was very red and he kept his eyes steadily on the ground.

"Did you kiss Susie, Tom Billy?" was the first question put to him.

"Yes'm."

"Why did you do it?"

"'Cause—'cause—oh, I don't know. Just 'cause"—Tom Billy gave it up.

"Come into the house, Tom Billy. You can't play with the girls any more," said Patsey, turning to go in.

"I don't care," said Tom Billy to one of the boys as he passed. "Susie can't wash that kiss off."

But Tom Billy was brought to repentance in another way. Susie's animosity was so great that she refused all his overtures in candy, pictures and pins, and gave her smiles to Will Henry. Tom Billy even found a paper under her desk with these lines addressed to his rival:

"Some loves ten and some loves twenty.

I love you, and that's a plenty.

Some loves one and some loves two.

I love one and that is you."

Tom Billy groaned tragically and tore the paper to pieces, hoping that Will Henry had not seen it.

Meantime Mrs. Upshaw had visited the neighbors and gathered public opinion concerning the school.

One interested mother, whose education had been obtained in a three months' course, complained that Miss Patsey gave too short lessons. The children "never would git through their books." Another believed the small children didn't study any, for she saw them on the playground about half of the time. A third disapproved of the teacher's dreamy countenance. "Look's like she don't know much," was her verdict.

Miss Flout, who lived in the large white house at the end of the west row and patronized the town charitably, whispered that she would not have Miss Lee at her forthcoming party, as she had heard that her people were very common.

Mrs. Upshaw discreetly reported only the more favorable comments, of which there were also many; though the others often came to Patsey through the children before whom they were made.

Patsey was sitting on the porch one evening with a bundle of written exercises in her lap which she was to correct for the children. She was tired and felt a little dispirited, as she often was when she got letters from home. Things so often went wrong there. The one she was reading said that Jody had had some accident and lost a great toe.

This was all the post had brought her today, though she had been expecting a letter from Mr. Raymond, who had written several times.

Mrs. Upshaw could not resist the aspect of lonesomeness. She came out to join Miss Lee, saying airily:

"Most people are mighty pleased with the way you are getting on, Miss Patsey, and Mrs. Piatt 'lows that half the boys around here is wild about you. I shouldn't be surprised if you're gettin' some cards before long, wantin' to take you to preachin' or some place 'nother."

Whether Mrs. Upshaw had a hint of a coming note or was endowed with the gift of prophecy is not certain, but a few days later Patsey received a communication which ran as follows:

"Donnie Bartlett presents his compliments to Miss Patsey Lee, and would be pleased to carry her to the Spelling Bee at Red Oak tonight.

"Your friend respectfully,

"Donnie Bartlett."

"I don't know what to do about it," she said seriously. "I'd rather stay at home, but I haven't any good excuse for not accepting."

"Why, you'll have to go," said Mrs. Upshaw, authoritatively. "The Bartletts are sending to school, and besides Donnie's a nephew of Piatt, and it wouldn't do to make them all mad. Anyhow, don't you stay around here and get old and curious just because you are a teacher. There aint no use in it."

In obedience to Mrs. Upshaw's advice, the note was answered in the affirmative, and in due time, which was before supper, Donnie drove up in his red-wheel buggy with his uncle's bob-tailed mare hitched to it.

Patsey had not begun her toilet, so Mrs. Upshaw and Docky took charge of him on the porch until she should be ready.

Here was a chance for Docky, who had a passion for driving.

"Say, Don," he said pleadingly, "lemme drive your horse down to the pond for water while you are waitin'."

Don gave a reluctant consent, hoping to further his progress in courting, of which Docky availed himself immediately, ignoring the reluctance.

As he drove toward the large round pond a few hundred yards away, he overtook Tom Billy, on foot, starting to the country for some butter.

"Git in and I'll drive yer there," he said magnanimously; and the pedestrian accepted the offer.

"Say, Dock, ain't this Piatt's old white mare?" asked Tom Billy, as they were coming back leisurely in the fading sunset.

"Yep."

"What are you doin' with her?"

"Don's up to the house to carry Miss Patsey somewhere," said Docky, unconcernedly.

"Golly! let's get back," said Tom Billy, lashing the horse with the broken whip.

Don had despaired of ever beholding his horse and buggy again, and Mrs. Upshaw was mortified beyond expression at Docky's conduct—and Miss Patsey's first beau, too!

When the ownership of the buggy was restored to Don at eight o'clock, he was irresolute about going on account of the lateness of the hour, and Patsey offered no encouragement.

"Oh, you all go on," insisted Mrs. Upshaw. "If it is late, the drive will be nice. I uster enjoy drivin' mor'n anything else when I was young."

Mrs. Upshaw's advice was nearly always imperative, and they went.

Don was very reticent; partly because Miss Lee was a stranger and he was bashful, and partly because his time and attention were given to keeping the lines from under the stubby tail of the white steed. However, after a distance of three miles had been past he coughed, cleared his throat, and was about to make an observation on the growing brightness of the night, when something happened.

"First a shiver and then a thrill,
And something decidedly like a spill."

And they were roughly evicted from the buggy.

On climbing from the clayey gully in which she had been deposited Patsey beheld, by the light of the moon, Don holding the mare firmly by the bit of the bridle and gazing helplessly at a disjointed wheel on the roadside.

"Are you hurt?" he asked considerably, when Patsey was substantially on her feet.

"No, but what shall we do?"

"Come and hold the horse, and I'll put the wheel on and we'll go home."

Patsey obeyed. The old mare stood blinking her eyes demurely, while Don, grunting and groaning, replaced the wheel. During the operation he expressed a sneaking suspicion of treachery of Docky and Tom Billy in unscrewing the tap. But Patsey protested their innocence.

The drive home was even more silent than the one away. Neither of them cared to repeat the experience, though Don did remark to a friend next day:

"I took my girl out driving last night, and we sure seen a time."

CHAPTER IV.

School Days.

Patsey walked home from school a few days later, worried and perplexed by the discovery that local dissensions were invading her school-room.

Mrs. Feltz had withdrawn Drusy from school for no other reason than that she sat in front of Lutie Seacamp, and Lutie's mother had made some very ungracious remark about the Ladies' Aid Society, of which Mrs. Feltz was president. Mrs. Wry had sent a note that day, asking that Benny and Bonnie be exempted from carrying water and sweeping the floor.

Benny and Bonnie were eligible to the duties laid upon them in common with the other children, and Patsey could see no reason for complying with the parent's request. If Benny was exempted from carrying water every other boy had the same right, and how

could the water be gotten from the spring, which was half a mile away? If Bonnie were released from her once a week sweeping, the other girls would make the same demand, and how would it all end?

The little teacher walked on in a deep study. How could they be so unreasonable? She turned the situation over and over in her mind, and the unreasonableness was more apparent at every turning. She might go to them and point out their errors, but she wasn't employed to teach the parents, even if they would let her. The fifty children under her charge were enough.

She had almost concluded to pay no attention, and if Mrs. Wry wanted to withdraw her children from school, all right. Mrs. Feltz and Mrs. Wry should be more interested in the welfare of their children than anyone else. School would go on the same and she would get her pay. Then a voice in her heart pleaded that the children should be kept somehow, and she entered her room to think it over further while she rested.

She was startled to find a suffering patient reclining in the rocking chair, pillowed and propped, by the window. A man with his back turned stood by the table, amalgamating something in his hand. An alcohol lamp burned on the table, and a peculiar odor filled the room.

Patsey hurriedly sought Mrs. Upshaw for an explanation. She was in the kitchen in a state of great hilarity.

"Go and primp yourself, child," she said cheerily as she bustled about with supper. "We've got a tooth dentist with us that's come clean from Louisville. He's mighty townish lookin', and mighty townish in his ways too, but he's real pleasant. You go and fix up and set the table for me. We ain't got much for supper tonight, but if you fix it up nice and put one of your bokays on it won't make much difference. I saw a picture in the paper where everybody was around the table eatin' and there wasn't a thing on the table but a few dishes and some flowers, and it looked like a boardin'-house too, fur there was so many people. You hurry up. Supper will be ready in no time. Isabella's gone down to the store for a can of corn."

"I'll fix it now, Mrs. Upshaw," said Patsey, hardly catching her landlady's enthusiasm. "I want to walk over to Mrs. Feltz's and Mrs. Wry's after supper, and would like to have mine as early as possible."

"What are you going there for?"

"I just want to see them about some school matters," she said evasively.

Mrs. Upshaw was too absorbed to make more inquiries, and Patsey felt relieved. She was beginning to know the golden value of silence since she came to Round Pond.

"Well, you go and fix up first. Supper'll be ready plenty early

enough. I've been tryin' to get Isabel to dress up all the evenin' and she won't. A body never knows when and from where their fate's a-comin'. It looked like mine wasn't comin', but it did sudden."

"But, Mrs. Upshaw, where am I to dress? and my clothes are all in the front room too."

"We can hang an old quilt or something up to the window in my room," was the undisturbed answer, "and I'll slip in and bring out some of your clothes. I reck'n I'd better bring enough to last several days and put 'em in my wardrobe, for he's got a good deal of work to do in town, he says, and I know in reason he'll want to stay that long. I guess you won't mind sleepin' with me and the girls can have the mattress on the floor. Seems like I have to make all I can," she added apologetically, "for it takes all your board money and more too, to pay the rent and grocer's bill, and we have to look to Providence and the transhunts for our clothes. This money will just come in right to get the girls' winter hats."

If Patsey felt dissatisfaction with the arrangements she expressed none, and in view of her intended visits she made the toilet (without a mirror) which Mrs. Upshaw insisted upon.

When the table was set with the best pewter and the company napkins, they surveyed it critically.

"I'll declare, Miss Patsey," said Mrs. Upshaw admiringly, "you ought to give up teachin' and go to cookin'. The table looks too nice to eat off of."

"Now, Ma," said Docky, anxious for correctness in everything, and remembering his mother's proneness towards omission; "don't you forget to introduce that man to Miss Patsey."

"Well, if I ain't forgot whether his name's Aggleson or Eagleson, but it's something like that," she said wiping a knife on the corner of her apron. "There ain't much in a name, anyway. Miss Patsey, you set over there on the bench by Docky tonight, and let him have your cheer."

Docky was pleased at this suggestion.

"Mamma," he insisted, more bent than ever on perfection, "you'd better act over introducing them."

"Well, maybe I had," said his mother thoughtfully. "I never could introduce anybody without makin' a babble. You git down there at the cheer, and let Miss Patsey stand here, and I'll practice."

Patsey could not resist the humor of the situation, and forgetting her troubles she took her stand, and laughing heartily, said:

"All right, Mrs. Upshaw; don't forget my name is Lee."

"Yes, and I'll call him Aggleson."

"Let her go," said Docky, impatiently.

"Hush, Docky, you bother me," said his mother. "I'll say this: 'Miss Lee, Mr. Aggleson. Miss Lee's our school teacher.'"

Patsey and Docky bowed profoundly.

"Please, madam, may I have a bowl of warm water?" asked the person under consideration from the doorway, as soon as an opportunity presented itself and he could control his voice.

Mrs. Upshaw was confused. She knocked down several pans in getting to the teakettle, and had great difficulty in focusing the spout to pour the water into the bowl. When she succeeded and he had disappeared Patsey and Docky laughed violently.

"I wouldn't laugh," she said. "I bet he thinks we are fools."

But when Mr. Eggleston was in reality in the reserved chair at the corner of the table, Mrs. Upshaw waived the ceremony. Mr. Eggleston, however, manifested no embarrassment, but ate and talked with the manner of one accustomed to society. He asked numerous questions about the town, the people and the school, and interested himself with studied politeness in the answers. So genial and fluent was he in conversation that Mrs. Upshaw was completely captured.

"He's the nicest man I ever seen," she declared after supper, "and I never was so put out in all my life, for I know he thinks we haven't a bit of raisin'. Miss Patsey, I wouldn't go over to Feltz's and Wry's this evening. I'd stay here and talk to him in the parlor. I git plum ashamed of Isabella. She hides around here like she is afraid somebody'll see her. There's no use at all in tryin' to get her nice clothes and fixin' her up."

But, whatever hopes, financial or sentimental, Mrs. Upshaw was building upon the stay of the engaging "tooth dentist," they were destined to an early decay. The next morning, before breakfast, two officers entered the house and led him ingloriously off in handcuffs for practicing his profession without a license.

Mrs. Upshaw's optimism went into temporary eclipse.

"Well, well," she sighed as she watched Patsey restoring her room to order; "a person never knows who she is takin' in; but the Bible says goats will come to you in lamb's clothes. Still, I don't know how I am goin' to get the girls' hats."

The evil of the transient lived after him and brought Docky to grief three days later, when he was deprived of recess for handcuffing the little Willowbys and imprisoning them in the coal house, much against their protest.

* * *

After this, troubles befell Patsey in battalions. It seemed sometimes that peace and good will among men on earth was forever at an end. Her visits to Mrs. Feltz and Mrs. Wry were only partially successful.

Mrs. Wry left her children in school on the condition that they should not perform their duties with certain other children; but Mrs. Feltz steadily withheld Drusy.

One morning just before school time, Mr. Piatt appeared at

the fence of the school-yard and motioned grotesquely for Patsey to come nearer. She advanced nervously from the doorway. His manner suggested an unpleasant communication.

"Miss Lee," he said, glancing cautiously about to see that none of the children were within hearing distance; "when you think it necessary to keep the children in at play-time, I think you'd better let them have their dinner first. It makes some children sick to do without their meals."

Patsey was astonished and hurt. "I never thought of such a thing, Mr. Piatt. If I keep the children in I always let them have their dinner first."

"Well," said Mr. Piatt in a kinder tone, "Mr. Smith was over this morning complaining that you kept one of his boys in all day without anything to eat, and I thought I'd see you about it."

"John Smith used profane language on the playground one day, and I did not let him play with the other children at the regular recess hours, but I gave him an hour's recreation alone and insisted on his eating his lunch at noon. He was angry and stubborn, and I don't know whether he did eat finally. I could not compel him to and did not think it necessary." Her voice trembled at the injustice of the accusation.

"All right," he said, riding off. "Some children will yarn, especially if they are not brought up better. I'll see Mr. Smith tomorrow."

Meanwhile behind the house a feud was culminating that had been brewing for some time between Tom Billy and Buster, who had each his followers.

"My dog can whip yours," said Tom Billy, smoothing the bristled hair of a large bull dog.

"Can't any sich a thing," retorted Buster, holding a terrier by a rope.

"I'll bet a dime he can," put in Jim in Tom Billy's behalf. "Yours ain't nothin' but a common yellow cur, anyway."

"I'll bet a dollar he can't," stoutly said Buster's second; "and it's got as good blood as Tom Billy's or anyone else's."

"We'll see," said Tom Billy. "Hi! sic'im! sic'im!" He clapped his hands vehemently.

The dogs flew at each other, the bull dog so much in evidence on top that Buster ran to his dog's assistance with a stick. Tom Billy and others followed, and the boys and dogs were indistinguishable as they rolled over the ground together.

Howls, yells and screams resounded through the air. Patsey arrived breathless on the field of battle but could not gain recognition until the dogs gave up the fight. Testimonials were so at variance that a verdict was difficult to render concerning the boys; but dogs were henceforth banished from the premises.

Docky carried home news of the fracas, and Mrs. Upshaw met the teacher at the door to cheer her up.

"Here's a nice big letter for you," she said. "I was goin' to send it up to school, and then I 'lowed you'd rather read it here at home."

Patsey smiled faintly, looked at the postmark of the letter, and then took it to her room, leaving her landlady slightly aggrieved. It did seem as if her thoughtfulness might have been rewarded by being told from whom it came.

These letters of Ernest Raymond's were little oases in the desert of our heroine's life. But today she was almost too tired to respond to the pleasure. Her heart felt sore. It was hard to toil laboriously on, and be constantly misrepresented, misjudged and criticised. She disconsolately could not see a ray of hope for a change, and she threw herself on the bed to indulge in a "good cry."

The next day a neighbor dropped in for a social gossip with Mrs. Upshaw.

"I think it's a shame," she remarked, "that Miss Lee's trying to take John Seacamp away from Allie. Everybody's talking about it. (She had heard one passing remark.) He's been up here three or four times lately, hasn't he?"

"She ain't trying to take him away," said Mrs. Upshaw emphatically. "John Seacamp comes here of his own accord. It's my opinion that he and Allie had a fuss before Miss Patsey came here. Anyhow, Miss Patsey wouldn't have John. You reck'n she'd give up a thirty-dollar job for a ten-cent dude? Besides," she added in a lower tone, "she's got a sweetheart off somewheres that she gets nice long letters from."

"Where does he live?" asked the visitor curiously.

"I don't know. In Egypt for all I know; but he writes a mighty nice hand and she's allays pleased to git them letters. Docky often gits a dime from her when he brings one."

Mrs. Upshaw now felt she had said enough, and changed the subject.

On the Friday after Thanksgiving the new-fledged Literary Society of the school invited their friends to an open session. Many rehearsals had taken place, and now the presence of parents and others was requested.

The time of preparation was a red letter day, for peace and amiability reigned among the children. In the morning of the eventful day all thoughts were turned to beautifying the school-room. Antiquated cobwebs were cleaned from the ceiling; bucket and dipper received a thorough scouring; greenbrier and cedar were brought from the woods and artistically twined around the stove-pipe, and over the windows and blackboard. Tom Billy stood ready to perform any task at Susie's bidding, and worked

harmoniously with Buster in clearing the leaves from around the door.

When the school-room couldn't be improved upon the girls turned their attention to their own and each other's toilets. One girl produced a comb and a piece of mirror from her dinner basket.

"Come, Flossie, and let me fix your curls. Ain't they just too pretty for anything, girls! I wish I had some like 'em."

The mirror was set up in a corner for public benefit.

"Oh, if we just had some whitenin'!" exclaimed another girl.

"Wait," said Susie; and retreating behind the door she produced the desired cosmetic, in the shape of a paper of flour, from her stocking.

"You're the smartest thing ever was, Susie," declared Bessie.

"Please, Bessie, tie my neck ribbon," said another. "You do tie such sweet bows."

"Don't Miss Patsey look lovely today?" asked Bonnie. "I'll declare she's the best teacher we ever had."

"Oh, let's fix up Daisy nice, for she says that little speech too sweet for any use," exclaimed Lucy ecstatically, dusting powder over the child's face with a dirty handkerchief.

"Oh, say, Susie, I can trade the best compliment with you," some one said.

"I'll bet it's something Tom Billy said," laughed several in chorus.

"Didn't Tom Billy fix them vines beautiful around the board?"

"I'm wild to write 'Welcome' up there now, but we have to have the board for Language and 'Rithmetic first," said Bessie.

"You print so nice, Bessie, I wish I could," said Lucy, turning to whitewash another little face. The small girls were placed aside as their toilets were completed, and gazed from their corner with adoring eyes at their taller friends.

The elaborate toileting and gushing flattery continued until Teacher came in from the playground and rang the bell.

Public events were rare at Round Pond, and visitors began to appear at 1:30, when school was moving along with its regular work; and soon the house was filled.

A nervous tremor passed over the school, and each little heart beat faster.

The Language Class was reciting. "Advertisements" was the subject, and Johnny, embarrassed and purple, stood to read his exercise:

"Lost, a red muley cow with no horns. She had a white spot and a bob tale on one side."

"Lost, a brown pocket-book on the road. It had a broken clasp and two holes on the bottom. There was 2 pennys in it."

"Lost, a black horse 16 ft. high. She had two white stockings and a spot in her hed."

Patsey felt more confidence in the success of Geography, for the lesson was a review of the Southern States, and had been previously prepared.

Question after question passed around the class, however, and each head seemed vacant.

"What are the Everglades of Florida, Bessie?" was asked at length.

Bessie hesitated. Lucy's face brightened and she raised her hand. She remembered sea island cotton in connection with Florida, and thought it would fit just here.

"What are they, Lucy?"

"Cotton!" answered Lucy, promptly and proudly.

Patsey realized the disadvantage the school was at, and judged well to resolve it into the Literary Society and proceed with the special program.

Bessie was in despair over the omission of "Welcome" from the blackboard, and whispered a request to put it there now; but Patsey judged it too late, and Tom Billy observed that whether they were welcome or not most of the folks at Round Pond were there already.

The officers of the society took their places about the table. Buster, the president, called the meeting to order; Lucy, the secretary, called the roll and read the minutes of the last meeting, which were properly adopted.

Then Lucy rose and announced: "The first number on the program is a Song of Welcome, by four little girls."

The four made a race to the middle of the floor and took their stand. They looked down to see if their toes were in line, put their fingers in their mouths, and then fixed their eyes on Patsey, who had to prompt them.

"Kind friends, we welcome you here today,
With songs of glee."

The four joined in and raced through the song, sometimes high, sometimes low, till the three stanzas were finished, then made for their seats.

"Next, 'A Mamma's Trouble,' by Daisy Deane," read Lucy.

Daisy came forward hugging a battered doll closely to her breast. She forgot the little bow she had been taught, and began in a frightened tone:

"I'm a broken-hearted Mamma,
Cause my baby is so bad—"

Then she broke off with, "Boo-hoo-hoo!" and Patsey had to conduct her from the floor and to her mother.

The rest of the program was rendered with original features. At one point in the drill the children were to lay their hands on their hearts, but John spread out his big red fingers over his stomach. Bessie could not remember her recitation at all, which

agreeably shortened the exercises, since it was twenty verses long.

Mrs. Smith went home convinced that the children were not learning a thing, and expressed this opinion to Mrs. Wry before Johnny; and Johnny circulated the news in school on the following Monday.

CHAPTER V.

At Home.

School closed at last, and Patsey returned to her father's house.

In spite of careful saving it was obvious that she could not carry out her plans in the near future. On a practical calculation on the beginning of the school term she had reconciled her desire for a university course to that of a college course, and tried to shape her plans to enter the State College to begin preparation for special work. But her father's crops had suffered from the drought in the summer and it was necessary to tide him over the winter and keep the mortgage at bay.

Mr. Brown agreed, on a partial payment of fifty dollars from Patsey's store, to extend the date of maturity of the note for three years.

She hurried home the day after school closed, for her mother had written that Jody was ill. Mrs. Upshaw parted from her with reluctance, but rejoiced in the girls' new hats bought with the board money.

Mrs. Lee met her daughter at the door.

"How is Jody, mother?" asked the girl, kissing her affectionately.

"He's worse all the time," she said, wiping her red eyes, "and talks out of his head so I can't hardly stand it. I don't know what I'd done if you couldn't come home. I'm nearly wore out. Sophia and the baby both had croup last night, and your Pa's so stove up with rheumatism he can't hardly get about."

Poor Patsey's thoughts for the future were completely lost in the present. For many nights she watched by the suffering little child as he tossed restlessly on his pillow, and often the angel of death hovered near, but took flight again. At last the tension abated, Jody took a turn for the better and they could think of other things.

It was no wonder the children were ill with the scanty clothing they wore. Hiram's naked toes showed through his shoes. His woolen stockings were around the necks of Sophia and the baby.

"Mother," said Patsey one morning. "I want you to go to town with me today to get the children some clothes. Every one of them will have pneumonia if they are not made warmer."

Mrs. Lee left off turning the hoecake for breakfast and looked at Patsey rather alarmed.

"Go to town, Patsey?" she said almost reproachfully. "You

know I haven't been to town since Sophia was a baby and ain't got a decent dress to my name. You'll have to get your Pa to go with you."

"No, mother, I want you. Father and Lizzie can take care of Jody and the baby while we are gone. Jody doesn't have to take any more medicine."

"Why, the children would go clean wild if I was to leave home, and I tell you I ain't nothin' to wear. Both of my wrappers is nearly faded white," again protested Mrs. Lee.

"Never mind about the clothes. We'll fix you up in something."

Patsey did not realize the vastness of her assurance, but Mrs. Lee finished breakfast feeling that Patsey's request was imperative, and that an appropriate costume would be provided at the proper time. Teaching had exalted Patsey in the esteem of her mother, who treated her ability as only short of superhuman.

After breakfast great excitement prevailed among the children as Patsey arrayed her mother in her surplus black skirt and blue calico waist, with suitable ribbons for collar and belt. Lizzie donated her "pretty good" shoes and wore her mother's ragged ones; but the question of headgear brought them to a standstill. Patsey had no extra hat and if she had one her mother couldn't have worn it with propriety. After much discussion Lizzie remembered an antiquated toque in a box in the garret and brought it forth. Patsey gave it a careful dusting, straightened the crown and readjusted the feathers, and set it on her mother's head. They threw some brown capes that had once been black over their shoulders, and started for town.

"I wish you had let your Pa gone," said Mrs. Lee nervously as she got into the road cart. "It's so long since I bought anything I'm almost afraid to risk my judgment, and I feel like something will happen at home, too."

However, she forgot the presentiment of calamity when they entered the town and busied themselves in visiting the different stores. A youthful glow spread over Mrs. Lee's tired, worn face, as she watched the people in the streets with the delight of a child. She had been housed so long with her cares she had almost forgotten the appearance of the outside world, and the sight awakened sleeping memories.

"It seems like it uster when I was young, Patsey, and went to town to buy my winter finery," she whispered, standing in the door of a first-class store. "I wisht you could have things like I did then."

In her heart Patsey yearned intensely for them too, as she looked at the beautiful dress goods, feathers and furs; but she smothered the passing pain and purchased jeans, gingham and shoes for the children and late in the afternoon they started for home.

At the gate they were met by six animated little Lees. They all stepped on each other's toes in their joyous prancing, and Hiram pushed Sophia from the back of the cart in trying to get possession of the biggest bundle. Dot and the baby toddled toward the gate with purple hands and shoeless feet. The baby was caught in his mother's arms and carried back into the house.

"Oh, this checkered dress is mine," cried Lizzie, recklessly unwrapping the bundles that had been thrown on the bed.

"No, it ain't; I'm going to have it," disputed Sophia, grabbing at it.

"No, Sophia, that's Lizzie's" said Patsey. "You mustn't be so noisy and rude. The red one is yours."

"Whoopee! It seems like Christmas," exclaimed Hiram, drawing on some long black hose and eyeing a pair of button shoes at his side.

Hershal was pushing his legs into the sleeves of a new coat, and began to whimper because they were too tight.

"You greeny!" cried Sophia. "That's the coat. Your breeches is on the bed."

"Haven't I got nothin'?" asked Jody, awakened by the noise and sitting up.

"Yes, dearie," said Patsey, going to him with a bundle. "See what nice new pants and shoes we have brought you. You will have to hurry and get well so you can wear them. And here is a little book for you to learn your letters from, too."

"I'm well now," said Jody, faintly. "Let me put 'em on."

"No, dear, not now. I'll put them beside you where you can look at them."

The baby wriggled from the lap of his mother, and stood off a little distance, surveying her dubiously.

"Well! I don't think the child knows me," said Mrs. Lee, amused. "Come back to your Ma, honey."

"No wonder," said Hiram, looking up from his shoes. "You look so diked in all them riggins."

During the confusion Hershal's coat, which he had left on the hearth while he hunted for a better fitting covering for his legs, caught fire from a popping spark and was in a blaze before discovered. In addition to the woe this caused him, he received a sound spanking for his carelessness, and could not be comforted by the promise of some "nice patches."

It was night before the house quieted down. The children could hardly eat supper for looking at their treasures.

Patsey's hands and mind were never at rest. While running the old sewing machine, making dresses and aprons, she was constantly planning for the improvement of the family and herself.

"Mother, I wish Jerry could go to school," she said one morning. "Don't you think he can next winter?"

"I don't know, Patsey. I wish he could too. He's awful awkward and backward, but I don't know what your Pa will say about it."

Patsey always consulted her mother first about any new movement, for she appreciated such efforts better and would help if she could. Mrs. Lee was often peevish and irritable, but never so unreasonably staid in her notions as her husband.

"Father," she said at noon, "can't you manage to let Jerry go to school in the spring? He's most sixteen and can hardly read."

"Tut, tut! Jerry's got no use for school larning. He's got to help me raise the tobacco, and pay off this here mortgage. No use in puttin' things like that in his head."

"But father, I'm helping pay the mortgage," said Patsey, "and I do want Jerry to go to school. I hate to have the children grow up in ignorance."

"You've got too big notions, Patsey. It's well enough for the rich folks to have big notions, but poor ones ain't got no use for them."

Finding her efforts here futile Patsey tried to infuse some ambition into Jerry himself, but he had been neglected too long. The slope to learning was too steep for him. He preferred his bad English and ease.

"But, Jerry, wouldn't you like to be smart like Mr. Hogan? He was a real poor boy but he worked and studied hard, and he is now you see one of the smartest and most respected men in the county."

"No, I don't want to be like him," said Jerry savagely, "he's a stuck-up fool."

"Don't, Jerry please, say that. It hurts my feelings for you to talk that way."

She now turned her attention to the younger ones, and in the evening, when it was possible to get a hearing around the crowded fireplace, she gave them simple lessons and told them stories of great men.

"I seen a great big man onct," said Hiram.

"Saw a large man," corrected Patsey.

"Oh, pooh! what difference does it make, Patsey, just so you understand what I'm tellin'."

Notwithstanding the lack of encouragement, Patsey would not give up. She cut pictures out of some old magazines and pasted them on the walls, planted flowers by the door, and put all the little touches she could around the house to create a love for the beautiful.

She never tired of trying to arouse ambition, and when she went back to Round Pond in the fall Lizzie and some of the younger children were prepared for school.

"Allie certainly has played off on us a long time," said Mrs. Upshaw when she came in from prayer meeting on the first evening of Patsey's return. "I allays have said John wasn't good enough for her, but you can't ever tell what a girl's goin' to do about marryin'. Might as well be guessin' on a commit. The ones you thinks most likely to marry turns out old maids, and them you thinks borned old maids up and marries first."

"Mamma, can't school teachers git married?" asked Docky earnestly, thinking of a line of spinsters that had led him along the path of knowledge.

"Hardly ever, Docky," said Patsey laughing and looking up from the sewing she had stayed home from prayer meeting to finish.

"Well, it is kind of queer," said Mrs. Upshaw, seriously. "As a most usual thing school teachers don't get married. I guess they don't find time to court."

Docky looked perplexed. "How long does it take?" he asked.

"Now Docky, that's a silly question. It takes some people longer than others. Here's Lon Slow been goin' with Julia Crabbe nigh on ten years, and a whole neighborhood of girls and boys has growed up and married in the meantime. But your pa didn't come to see me but three times."

"Why don't you tell us who Allie's going to marry, mamma?" said Isabel, to save an often repeated story.

"That's the part she kept us fooled on so long. It's a man from town and they say he's rich as a Jew and lives in a fine big house. She met him when she was goin' to school in town. I always have wisht you could go to school there, Isabel."

"Why, I never could go to school here, much less in town," said Isabel, sighing, as she folded up some sewing she was doing for a neighbor. "When is Allie to get married?"

"Two weeks tomorrow, at the church, and you ought to have a new hat to go, but you ain't got a sign of one."

"I don't mind," said Isabel, contentedly.

"Maybe something will turn up," said Mrs. Upshaw, hopefully. "I read in a book the other night where a widow woman ast a banker fur five dollars, and he made a mistake and wrote fifty, an' when the woman took it back and showed it to him he gave her five hundred fur bein' so honest."

"Oh, Ma," said Docky, disgustedly, pounding on his mother's knee. "That ain't so; that's in my third reader."

For two more winters Patsey taught the five-months term of school at Round Pond. Though complaints and criticisms did not abate, the trustees recognized her earnest, conscientious labor and asked her to continue; though each year she hoped to make a change to a more congenial atmosphere and work. But each year brought necessities at home that made the college course impossible.

Her correspondence with Ernest Raymond continued during the second year. He was then at the University, and his letters describing it and his comments on new books, etc., were very interesting. Her first liking for Mr. Raymond had been partly because that sort of a man was so new to her. He was so different from her father and the farmers around home and at Goose Creek; at Round Pond they were not so very much superior in education and refinement. But by this correspondence they came to know each other better, and Patsey's feeling became warmer and deeper. His last letter was very friendly and he told her fully about his prospects which had become straighter and brighter, and had said, "I wonder if you would be glad to see an old friend if he came to see you?"

Patsey had replied at once, and afterwards she blushed to think how warmly she had written; for days, weeks and months passed, and neither Raymond nor a letter from him appeared.

This was the beginning of the third school year, and that winter Patsey found her work very hard. The freshness of her color was fading, and the soft, dreamy expression of her blue-gray eyes was changing to one of patience and sadness.

She and Mrs. Upshaw were sitting by the fire one evening, when Docky came in with a shout:

"Letter for Miss Patsey!"

Patsey took it eagerly and nervously, but a look of disappointment flashed over her face as she examined it.

Mrs. Upshaw was watching her keenly over her glasses. She had noticed how anxious Patsey was about the mail.

"You don't get as many letters as you used to," she remarked innocently.

"No, not so many," said Patsey, coloring confusedly.

Her friend was a daughter of Eve, and had been nurtured in Round Pond. She had laid many conjectures concerning the teacher's growing sadness, but now she felt she knew the substantial cause. But she wondered from whom this letter came.

"Your home folks all well?" she ventured again.

Patsey was reading the letter and did not answer for a minute. She was smiling, but it was a different smile from the one she used to have, Mrs. Upshaw observed.

"It's not from home, it's from an old pupil," said Patsey, at last.

When she was alone she re-read it:

"My tru lov, Miss Patsey:—I seat myself with pleasure to wright you a few lines hoping it will find you well and doin well. I wonder if you have forgot me, Miss Patsey. I hav thout of you ever since you left. I ain't thout of nothin else. You mad me want to be a man and I've been trying ever since you left.

"I went to school 2 winters and I have worked hard all the yere for I wanted to tell you I love you and want to marry you. I

suspeck you will be surprise Miss Patsey, but I aint never thout of nothin else since you left. please Miss patsey hurry and wright. I am waitin dreadin and anxious for your letter. Your tru lover till death. Bobby."

Patsey could not suppress a smile as she thought of Bobby when she saw him last. Of his light jeans suit, his uncouthness, and of the little green bottle of cologne. But she believed in his sincerity and she was pained to give him pain. She wondered what effect her refusal would produce on him, soften it though she might. But she would not keep him in suspense and she wrote before she went to bed that night.

"My dear Bobby:—I was very glad to hear from my old pupil, for I have often wondered what he is doing, and I am glad to know that he has developed into a useful, noble man. But, Bobby, you are mistaken about your feelings for me. I am just your old maid teacher whom you must always feel kindly toward, but you do not want to marry her, for she could never make you a happy, contented wife. Love some girl near you, Bobby; some nice little girl who will make you happy as you deserve to be, and some day the old maid teacher will come and see you both. Write to me again and tell me of Henry and all my old pupils. And remember, Bobby, I shall always be proud that I have influenced such a noble boy. With best wishes for your success in all your undertakings, I am your sincere friend, PATSEY LEE."

She sighed as she folded the letter. She was sorry to have to give the same pain to someone else that she was feeling herself. Then she took out Raymond's last letter and read it again. Perhaps, after all, he had not meant all that she had supposed. He did not really say he would come and see her; he only suggested it. He may have found he could not come. But why did he not write? Well, perhaps he had grown tired of the correspondence. "I could have stopped it if I had wanted to," argued Patsey to herself; and then smiled at the idea. Then she read over all his letters and took herself to task for having imagined too much from them. They were just friendly, that was all. It was a pleasant memory to have had a friendship even if it became nothing more. Some day in the future perhaps they would meet when she had forgotten the bitterness and kept the sweet.

"Miss Patsey seems to get more indifferent like every day," observed Mrs. Upshaw to Mrs. Seacamp during a neighborly gossip; "and don't seem to kere fur a thing but readin' and her school. She sets up late readin' and writin' in tablets. There ain't any use in her getting so curious and settling down to bein' an old maid when she ain't much over twenty-two if that. Why, I'se thirty-five when I married and havin' as good a time as anybody, if I did have to work from pillar to post fur my livin'. I went every night

when I was her age; but she won't hardly go to a party with Isabel."

"But school teachers are mighty likely to be old maids," rejoined Mrs. Seacamp calmly.

"Yes," Mrs. Upshaw got up to stir the fire. "But I kinder think Miss Patsey's had a lost love affair. But shucks! there ain't no use grieving about that. I felt bad and tore to pieces when Pete died, but me and the children's pulled through very well."

"You do get along. There's nothing like knowin' how to shuffle for yourself."

"That's the truth, Mrs. Seacamp. There's two things I've allays helt to. You can make a livin' somehow or other, and there ain't no use in gettin' old. My face may be wrinkled"—and truly it was!—"but I feel just as much like jumping a rope when I haven't washed all day as I did when I went to school. Now I've been thinking we might give Miss Patsey a s'prise of some kind before she leaves. She's worked real faithful here."

"That's what I told Mrs. Hatfield when she complained Buster wasn't learnin' anything. He couldn't, you know, if you put a whole lib'ry of books in his head. And Mrs. Wry says she's partial to the Schoepel children, but I told her I knew better."

"Well, it would be hard for an angel to love them Wry children, the way she's brung them up."

And they went on to plan Patsey's "surprise."

CHAPTER VI.

On Pleasure Bent.

A candy pulling at the school-house was decided on by Mesdames Upshaw and Seacamp for the parting surprise. Notes were stealthily sent out requesting two pounds of sugar from each home, and the event was near at hand before the slightest hint reached Patsey. Then she had already begun preparations for taking the children to town the same day.

This trip had been discussed since the early days of school, but owing to the difficulty of getting a team till the fall plowing and sowing were done it had been postponed till the end of the term.

The children were undecided as to which to choose, the candy pulling or the visit to the city. When the news of the new difficulty came to Mrs. Upshaw, her equanimity was unruffled.

"Oh, I don't see any botheration about that. You can have 'em both as well as not, give the children a good dose of pleasin'."

So it was decided that the surprise candy should be pulled on Friday afternoon, and on the following day the city sights should be viewed.

"Whoopee! won't we have a time!" said Will Henry, when these arrangements were announced at school.

"And it won't be over so quick," added Buster.

At the appointed hour of two the instigators of the frolic arrived on the scene, loaded with sugar, pots and pans. A roaring fire was built in the stove, which brought the temperature of the room up to summer heat, and the children were all inclined to remain there.

"Oh, you children go out and play, and the candy won't be half so long cookin'," said Mrs. Seacamp.

Patsey endorsed this command, and the children reluctantly went to the playground and began a game of tag.

"I'll declare," said Mrs. Upshaw when the room was cleared, "I'd go stark crazy if I had all these children to contend with and manage. It's queer how much people do expect of a teacher. They send children to school that they've had all their lives and can't manage at home, and think the teacher ought to control forty of just such and make angels out'n the whole bunch. My children ain't so powerful good, but I never blame anybody with it but them and myself."

Patsey felt she would like to shake hands with Mrs. Upshaw for these sentiments. But that lady's hands were occupied with shifting the candy kettle which was much too large for the stove, so that only part of it was over the fire.

"Mrs. Upshaw, I'm afraid it will take the candy a long time to cook," said Patsey, peeping in at the undissolved sugar.

"No it won't. Now you be easy and we'll manage this. We don't want you to do a thing but enjoy yourself."

Patsey settled down to being easy and enjoying herself, but in half an hour the syrup was only lukewarm.

"You're right, I'll declare. This candy won't be cooked till Doomsday in this kettle. Send Docky down to the house to get my tin bucket."

"Gracious! It'll take a long time to cook enough in that," said Mrs. Seacamp, taking the gallon and a half pail that Docky brought.

"No it won't. We can do a third at a time. We ain't got pans enough to go around for all, anyway."

This plan caused dissatisfaction, especially when it was known that the primary grade should come first.

"Never mind," said Buster philosophically. "They'll know how to cook it all the better when they come to ours."

"This has just got to be done," said Mrs. Upshaw, making about the twentieth test in cold water.

The first batch was poured into the pans and Mrs. Seacamp took then one by one to the door and distributed them to the smaller children.

"Set it on the ground till it cools. Be kereful and don't spill it on your hands and take the skin off."

Johnny Willowby didn't understand, but scraped up a handful

and immediately screamed loudly. Patsey conveyed him to the nearest house to have his hands dressed. The other children took warning and were more cautious.

"Well, for mercy sakes! ain't Johnny got a bit of gumption?" exclaimed Mrs. Seacamp. "Come, children, hurry; we'll have to have them pans back directly. Git your spoons out of your dinner baskets and eat it that way."

The next division were interested in a game and did not hurry when their turn came. Mrs. Seacamp called them the second time, and the candy was quite cool enough for pulling when they came up.

"Lordy!" said Tom Billy, thumping on the hard crust in the pan. "You couldn't get this out with a pick-axe."

"It's hard as a brickbat; it will break every tooth if we try to eat it," said Bessie.

"Well, that's too bad," said Mrs. Upshaw; "but it's better than having it too sticky. Git it out some way, for we got to have them pans again."

"I'm sorry it ain't good," whispered Tom Billy to Susie, "for I wanted you to pull mine with me."

Patsey thought it was time to break up the party, but Mrs. Upshaw would not hear of wasting the rest of the sugar. Night was spreading a mantle over the earth and stars of the first and second magnitude were twinkling when the last of the candy was portioned out. Various arrangements had to be made to get the unprotected girls and small boys to their respective homes. All the larger boys were used as escorts, and Daisy's father came for her wearing a very unpleasant countenance.

"That candy pulling was a mess," admitted Mrs. Upshaw to Mrs. Seacamp over the fence the next day; "but Mrs. Hatfield needn't say nothin'. She's just mad 'cause she didn't get it up."

In spite of late hours, there was an early assemblage at the school-house next morning, and a wagon loaded with the happiest pupils of Round Pond school was soon en route to the city. Some had been kept at home by cautious parents, who were wary of smallpox, street cars, and a thousand other dangerous things associated with cities.

The wagon-load chatted, sang and shouted till the very atmosphere caught their mirth.

"I wonder what makes everybody smile and grin so that we meet?" said Bessie.

"Let's get out and walk the rest of the way," suggested Buster as they entered the suburbs. "Wouldn't these mules have a time grazing in that there big yard?"

"Don't talk so loud, Buster, and don't forget your grammar," said Patsey. "That building is the Boys' College and the yard around it is called the campus."

As they drove down State Street they subsided into

silence, gazing in admiration at the beautiful buildings. The mules were put up at a livery stable, and the children formed into a little procession by twos in the middle of the street.

"Come over on the sidewalk, children," called the teacher.

Re-forming the procession, a small boy was missing, and after a little delay was found in the back of the stable. At last the procession moved up the street, attracting some attention and laughing comment, which the children were too absorbed to notice.

"We are going to the park over there first," said Will Henry, who was at the head by Miss Patsey's side; "and you all keep up there behind. We don't want to get scattered over the town. It's the biggest thing I ever seen, anyway. If anybody gits lost it'll be good-bye Ma."

This scared the little ones, and they walked primly along, looking neither to the right nor left. At the park they all admired the fountain, and Tom Billy criticised the sign, "Keep off the grass, \$5.00 fine." "I don't see that it's any better than our grass at Round Pond," he said.

At the extensive grounds around the reservoir, however, they were allowed to roam freely.

"This'll be the bulliest place to eat our dinners," said Buster. "I'd choke to swallow a mouthful down in that crowded town."

Miss Patsey approved this suggestion. Though it was not twelve o'clock, the little paper bag which each child carried was in the way. So they crowded the benches to masticate their ham and biscuit.

"Now when we are through eating," said the leader, "we will go and see the monkeys and rabbits and 'coons in the lower corner of the grounds."

"Monkeys!" exclaimed Ben, prancing about.

The clamor at the cage of the monkeys was so excited that Miss Patsey had to exercise her best authority to keep the railing from being torn away, and the cage upset.

"Why, they look just like little boys in the face, don't they, Miss Patsey?" cried Ben.

"I'se jest thinking that little one over there favored you, Ben," said Docky.

"It don't!"

"Well, it might. I heard one of your grandpas was a monkey."

Docky's exposition on evolution was cut short, and the line of march was ordered back to the city.

Their visits had to be hurried, but they saw the school buildings, courthouse, jail, factories, and finally went into the tallest public building to ascend to the fourth story in the elevator. In they rushed like sheep. Patsey followed and the door was closed for an upward flight, when a wail was heard and the two little Willowbys were descried standing afar in a dejected attitude.

"Oh, wait!" said Patsey, and hurried out.

"Come, dears, we didn't mean to leave you. Come and have a nice ride." But they hung back, and no coaxing could move them.

"I know we can't get out again," sobbed Luke. "The man at the jail couldn't."

"I never had such a good time in my life," said Buster as they drove home.

"And I've learned a right smart," added Lucy.

"Wisht we had steamboats on Round Pond," said Docky.

* * *

"Where is it you are going, Miss Patsey?" asked Mrs. Upshaw the night after school closed, as she watched the teacher put the finishing touches on a new waist.

"I am going from here to the Teachers' State Association at Louisville, Mrs. Upshaw."

"Why, that's where that tooth dentist come from that cheated me so. Do you reckon you'll be apt to run acrost him up there anywheres?"

"I think I won't be very likely to," said Patsey laughing.

"Well, if you do accidentally do it," she continued, not discouraged, "I wisht you'd ast him to hand you that board money he owes me. I could use it very well now. Isabel's goin' to have a new beau a Sunday, and I wisht she could have a new waist to wear. What's a Teachers' Association for, anyway, Miss Patsey?"

"Teachers from all parts of the state get together to discuss educational matters."

"It's kind of like a Baptist Association, I reckon, only they don't believe in clost communion. They have Baptist Associations here at Round Pond right often, and they git pretty warm talkin' things over."

Patsey had been looking forward to the Association for some months. It was an educational feature of which she felt she could afford to avail herself and had a legitimate right to enjoy, since the necessary expenses would not be great.

It had been hard to keep up her studies and with the doings of the educational world, for the crowded household at Mrs. Upshaw's, disturbed by frequent transient boarders, afforded but little solitude and meagre opportunities for improving the mind, and at home it was even worse. But her whole life struggle had been made under difficulties, and the sharpest edge seemed to be wearing away.

But the Association stirred new emotions within her. She would come in contact with prominent successful teachers, hear able discussions, get a glimpse of the moving world, and even herself be a tiny part of it.

If the thought that she might meet old acquaintances was in her mind, she would not encourage it.

She started the next evening, expecting to arrive in Louisville early in the morning, but the train was delayed and it was ten o'clock before it pulled into the city.

The general uproar and confusion were bewildering to one unaccustomed to traveling, and distracted Patsey could hardly tell where to go first; but at last she got herself driven to the boarding-house she had written to, left her baggage and found her way to the Hall.

The Association was organized and a speaker was on the floor, and she was ushered to a seat not far from where she stood. She caught the tone of his voice first, then looking up she recognized Ernest Raymond.

Patsey leaned back in her chair, pale and feeling a little faint. The speaker hesitated in his talk, finished and took his seat. Other discussions followed: Educational Progress of Kentucky, and A Reform of Our Public School System, divided into sub-topics, were talked on at length.

Patsey had time to recover herself a little, and found herself stealing furtive glances at her friend. She thought he had not seen her; well, she would not be the first to speak. But at noon adjournment he came immediately to her.

"This is certainly a pleasant surprise, Miss Lee," he said eagerly, offering his hand.

Patsey trembled a little, but managed to answer composedly and even coolly:

"I hardly expected to see you here. I supposed you had gone back South."

"No, I finished at the University last summer and have come back to Kentucky to stay. And where have you been since I heard from you?"

"At Round Pond," she answered, feeling a little mortified at the thought of her non-progress beside his advancement.

"You will be here during the Association? May I ask where you are stopping?" If he noticed her cold manner he overlooked it.

Patsey gave the address, but without asking him to call, and managed to slip away. Alone in her own room she sat down to think, in a conflict of feeling. She was glad to have the advantage of the Association, and yet she was unhappy. All her old longings were aroused by the touch with culture and refinement, and then chilled by the memory of her hampered opportunities. "Oh, I wish," she said to herself with a groan, "that I could be satisfied with my lot. I can't have the luxuries that others are heir to; why can't I just enjoy the taste of the morsels of pleasure that comes to me—but every taste makes me yearn for more. I wish I had never met that man, and I wish, oh, I wish he weren't here!"

A knock at the door aroused her, and a little darkey appeared with a bouquet of beautiful white and red carnations.

"Miss, here's some flowers sent up for yer."

"For me!" she exclaimed, gazing devouringly at the beauties. But they were addressed to her in a well-known hand, and on the accompanying card was the name of Ernest Raymond.

The writing recalled his last letter and her unanswered one. She wanted no overture in flowers to efface a slight in the past. She hesitated and looked around, but the boy was gone. After all, perhaps it would conceal her feeling best to accept them with polite indifference.

He seemed to think he could lay aside a friendship and take it up again just as it suited him. Patsey's disposition was too sincere to tolerate fickleness, and her pride, pricked by poverty, would not be conquered by a few smooth words. In this unhappy mood she went back to the Hall.

She met Mr. Raymond frequently, but managed to avoid any long conversations with him, and her manner was polite, but never cordial.

She met many teachers from her county, who seemed like friends away from home, and among them Miss Grey, whom she had not seen since the Institute days.

"And how do you feel about teaching now, Patsey?" asked the older teacher. "Has your work come up to your expectations?"

"I'm afraid not, Miss Grey," said Patsey with a faint little smile. "I have found that teaching in the district schools is not only far from a primrose path but unsatisfactory in every way. The work must be tireless and unceasing, and the results very slow; but the consciousness that I am doing my best helps me."

"I've been through it all," said Miss Grey with a sigh. "And I suppose you mean to continue? Once in a harness it is hard to get out."

"Yes, but I am anxious to make a change and get into some graded school this year, so I'll have a better opportunity for preparing myself in the special course I have chosen. I dream sometimes of occupying the chair of English and Literature in a college."

"That would be very pleasant," said Miss Grey. "Oh, by the way," she went on, as if trying to bring it in casually, "Mr. Raymond is here, the algebra teacher from the Institute. Have you seen him?"

"Yes," said the girl, coloring extravagantly.

"He is very much improved," said Miss Grey; and then she called attention to some handsome residences they were passing, and Patsey recovered herself. They had "chipped in" in their old fashion, for a drive.

CHAPTER VII.

Her Best Certificate.

The last evening came, and Patsey thought with a sinking heart of going back to the dreary life at home. She had enjoyed the Association in spite of drawbacks, and felt like a different person. She had drunk of the pleasure of being in a congenial atmosphere, and thoughts of home were more dreary than ever tonight. She had made sacrifices willingly, but even a knowledge of doing her duty could not wholly obliterate the original yearning.

But now she felt miserable and happy in the same moment. She had never been in such a mood. Ernest Raymond had asked today if he might not call before she left ("If that has anything to do with it!" she wondered).

She stood at the window and watched the gathering darkness and one star overhead, and recalled the childish star-wish:

"Star light,

Star bright,

First star I've seen tonight,

I wish I may, I wish I might

Have the wish I wish tonight!"

Patsey repeated it half aloud, and smiled.

Two hours later she sat in the little parlor, and Ernest Raymond was beside her, speaking eagerly.

"Miss Lee! Patsey! I am determined to ask for some explanation. Why did you never answer my last letter, even if you had to say no?"

"Why, I don't know what you mean," said Patsey, confused. "It was you who did not answer me."

"No, indeed! The last letter I had from you was nearly a year ago. I had written, you know, asking if I might come and see you."

"Yes, and I answered that."

"And I got your answer and it emboldened me. But I was ill then, you know."

"Oh, no! I didn't know."

"I couldn't write for a long time—"

"Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"Never mind; I'm all right now. I wrote the first minute I could; it was very shaky but I thought you could read it—"

"Yes, indeed!"

"And I asked you if you would be my wife."

"I never got it. I thought it was strange you never wrote again. But are you sure? Perhaps you changed your mind and didn't send it."

"Won't you believe me, dear Patsey? Every effort I have made since we met has been for you; the only thought that

sustained me through all my struggles was that some time we would enjoy the fruits of them together. I did not speak two years ago because my prospects were so dark I could not ask you to share them. But now very soon I know I can make you comfortable."

"If I had had that letter," hesitated Patsey, "I would—"

"What would you have said? Say it now!" said Ernest, in the imperious fashion that Patsey had once laughed at.

"Yes," she whispered.

"And will you wait one long year for me, and then let us be happy together?"

"I believe you, Ernest, and I can wait a lifetime with the knowledge that you love me," she said, looking up and smiling through her tears as he pressed her to his breast.

Ernest pleaded that Patsey should rest during the year of waiting; but she insisted that she must teach still. Indeed she knew staying at home would be very little rest to her, and the help she was able to give was needed. It might be needed more than a year, for she felt she could not leave her work of elevating the family in an uncertain state.

But her work was to be pleasanter, for with Mr. Raymond's assistance she secured a position in the primary department of an unpretentious girls' college. When this was arranged she went back to her father's to spend the intervening time, to help her mother and to dream over her new happiness.

Hiram met her at the station with a strange horse hitched to the cart.

"Why, where's Dick, Hiram?" asked his sister.

"Fell into a sink hole and killed himself," said Hiram gloomily. "This is Mr. Brown's horse we had to borrow."

Poor faithful Dick that had served so well! Patsey shed some silent tears. Her mother met her at the door with the same news.

"What'll we do, Patsey?" she sobbed. "Dick's dead, and Jerry can't make a crop with just the mule, and the rest of the money has to be paid this year."

"Never mind, mother; we'll get another horse somehow," said Patsey, covering her own depression with a smile. Her mother followed her into the house, drying her tears and feeling that troubles were much lighter, as she always did when Patsey came.

Lizzie, who had developed wonderfully in the last year or so, was just home from training school in exultant possession of a second-grade certificate. Patsey took her into her confidence rather than their mother, and together they made plans for the future of the family. It seemed most expedient that Lizzie should gather some children in the neighborhood, eight besides the Lees, and teach a three months' session in the spring; thus making some pin money, gaining experience, and giving the children at home a chance. Besides, if Lizzie gave satisfaction with this

school it would enhance her chance of securing the fall term, which would pay better.

"This teachin' ain't no bad business," observed Mr. Lee on the presentation of a new horse. "Craps air so uncertain, it might of been better if Jerry had been a gal and taught."

"You didn't want Patsey to teach to begin with," retorted his wife; "and I dunno what we'd ever done without her. She's kept up the family fur years."

"I didn't mind her teachin', Nancy, except it's a great risk in startin' a thing." Apropos, he lifted his rheumatic leg, placed it across his right knee and grunted audibly. "It ain't no trouble keepin' on after you once git started an' we kin make out very well now since Lizzie kin teach."

Poor Patsey had often to retreat to her room and relieve her feelings in a flood of tears. She did not mind spending almost her last cent for the horse, but her father's narrowness and vulgarity jarred harshly on her. At times it was almost unbearable, and an impulse came to go away and live for herself, her self-sacrifices seemed so useless. Then her better nature saw the barrenness of happiness of this sort; and she almost thought instead that she had no right to personal happiness. Perhaps she ought to write and sever her betrothal. But what is stronger than a woman's true love? She realized that she couldn't do that; it would deaden all vitality and make her useless in any cause. She must still be patient.

The long hot summer dragged by. Patsey helped her mother in the rough work of the kitchen, tried to encourage her father, and be a helpful companion to Lizzie and the other children.

Semi-weekly letters came from Ernest, full of tenderness, love and hope. She shuddered to think what life would be without them.

But another Lee had been lovemaking, and without a word of warning, one Saturday night, Jerry brought a blushing bride home.

Poor Mrs. Lee was in a paroxysm of consternation. "I don't know what we'll ever do," she wailed bitterly. "The house isn't big enough to hold my own children, and here's Jerry bringin' another. She ain't been raised yet, and the Lord knows I've got enough on my hands to bring up without taking in somebody else's. It's nice takin' care of a wife Jerry can do!"

"There ain't no use of makin' all this fuss, Nancy," put in Mr. Lee. "Maybe it'll be the makin' of Jerry. I wasn't much mor'n his age when we got married, and didn't have much more money, and we've got on purty well, considerin' the houseful of children."

"If you think we've got on well, Jacob Lee, I'd like you to be in my shoes," said his wife sharply. "I haven't had a minute's rest since the first years we were married. If I'd had any sense

I'd have stayed in school where my father put me, and that's where this child ought to be."

Patsey tried to comfort her mother, but her common sense saw that Jerry's bride would be no advantage to his character. Lizzie was indignant and did not conceal it. She and Jerry were in daily combats.

"There's no use of our trying to do anything," she exclaimed to Patsey, "when everything humiliating happens that possibly can. It makes me sick to think of Jerry bringing one of those Wayland girls here that hasn't an idea of her own nor a care above her stomach. I'll never have the forbearance that you have, Patsey."

"Please, Lizzie, stop quarreling with Jerry; that doesn't help matters. And don't get discouraged. I am counting on you to help Sophia some day as I've helped you."

"I won't go back on you, Patsey, but I believe it would be better for me to get a school away from home."

Her sister persuaded her to take the one that was offered here, for the younger children's sake. "You know how careless Father and Mother are about sending them if we are not here to insist. Be good, dear, and perhaps some day we (Patsey blushed a little) can help you to something better."

So Lizzie consented, and Patsey left for her new position. It was such a step in the way of advancement for Patsey that it seemed too good to be true, and she resolved upon making her work a success at whatever cost, for her own sake and with the idea that she might influence the principal to give the place to Lizzie when she left it; and she sent her sister magazines and books on teaching.

Her work was pleasant and her surroundings congenial, nevertheless she welcomed the passage of time that brought her nearer to the one she loved best.

Toward the end of the second term Patsey was threatened with nervous prostration, and the physician ordered a rest. Patsey spent a week in bed, and then protested that she was quite able to teach till commencement, which came none too soon. Then Ernest stepped in and imperiously demanded an immediate wedding.

Though accustomed to confusion the Lee domicile was never in such a state of commotion as in the days preceding Patsey's final going away. Mrs. Lee's tears flowed apace, and the house was in danger of a washout. Mr. Lee shook his head dubiously, murmuring against the risk of launching on new seas.

"I ain't regrettin' anything but givin' you up, though, Patsey," said her mother, "for gracious knows you've done your part, and since the debts are all paid and some of the children big enough to work for themselves we can git along. But you'll go way off to town to live where everything's so nice and that man won't let you come back to your poor home."

Mrs. Lee could not overcome her awe of her prospective son-in-law enough to speak of him by name.

"No, Mother, Mr. Raymond will not care, and I will come home as often as I can afford to. You know we shall be poor too; we shall have only his salary to live on. And now, Mother, won't you encourage the children to try to get an education? You see how hard it is to get on without one. Perhaps if Jerry had gone to school he wouldn't be such a burden on us, or married into that family."

"What they're goin' to do with that baby is more'n I can tell," said Mrs. Lee.

"But the others will do better. Lizzie has my place for next year, and Hiram is a good industrious boy."

"Yes, it's wonderful how you've brought the children out. You took after my father about book learning, Patsey, and I'm glad you did."

So Patsey left the family in the hands of Providence and worked at her simple trousseau, with Lizzie's grateful help. She declared that, inconvenient though it was, she would be married nowhere else than among her own people, so she and Lizzie and Hiram and Sophia fitted up the shabby little sitting-room for the wedding.

And one morning in the middle of June, when the sun had come from behind a heavy cloud and the birds sang merrily in the apple tree by the window, Ernest Raymond and Patsey Lee stood in the light that streamed across the room, and their lives were joined for time and eternity.

The old pastor, who had baptized Patsey married her, and following them to the cab he handed her to her husband, charging him to take tender care of his jewel, and invoking heaven's richest blessings on them and theirs through life.

As they drove to the station, Ernest drew her toward him to rest against his shoulder.

"Are you happy, Patsey?"

"Oh yes, Ernest! so much happier than I feel I ought to be."

"We are going to the nicest little place among the hills, where I can nurse your strength back and keep you as happy as I can."

"And praise God for His goodness, Ernest," added Patsey.

September days are advancing. Patsey Raymond sits by a window of her suburban cottage home in a southern town. The sunlight falling across her head reveals the appearance of a few silvery threads in the abundance of brown hair, but our Patsey is more beautiful than ever.

Everything in the little sitting-room bears an air of refinement. Under the opposite window two children are chattering over their

play with building blocks, stopping now and then to appeal to their mother.

"Let's don't build it so high, brother. Let's make an ogre's castle to put all the bad people in, like Papa read about in the Fairy Book," said the younger, completing the castle abruptly with the blocks he held in his chubby hands.

"No, no, Leland. Let's build it tall and grand, like the good king's palace. I don't like ogres nor bad folks either, and Mamma says we mustn't have anything to do with them," said Ernest Junior in a serious tone.

A shadow flitted across Leland's baby face at the thought of disobeying Mamma, and running across the room he impulsively threw his arms around her neck. "I love my Mamma," he whispered; then looking through the window he shouted, "Oh, here comes Papa!"

Both the boys made a rush to the entrance door, followed by their mother.

"Dear, I have some letters for you," said Ernest as they reentered the sitting-room. "One I know is from Lizzie, but as to the other my curiosity and jealousy are excited to the highest pitch, for from the caligraphy and capitalization it might be from another Bobby. I think I will exercise my legal right in opening it." And he teasingly held it from her at arm's length.

"Do," said Patsey, laughing, "for I am curious too."

Her husband broke the seal and she peeped over his shoulder. "Perhaps it is from Buster," he said, for he was acquainted with the names of all her old pupils.

"No, it's from Mrs. Upshaw; that dear old soul made up of so many queer compounds."

"Read it aloud and let's have the news of Round Pond."

Patsey smoothed the crumpled paper and read:

"dear esteemed frend.

"I seat myself with pleasure and love to write you a few lines to let you kno I'm well and hope thes few lines will find you enjoyin the same blessin. Docky and me has been talkin about you, and I thout I'd rite to tell you about all us folks at Round Pond. Docky got a good job at the store here and is doin mighty well. Isabel got married at last and has got three childens. She lives out close to Rock Springs, but Flossie beat her marryin. She married a transhunt that stopped here, but he wasn't no tooth dentist. He was an agent. Susie and Tom Billy, I guess you heerd of there weddin. It was a big thing. Buster aint no bigger nor better than he uster be. Bessie's dead and Lucy's teachin skule. They had a big meeting at the baptis church last week but none of the metherdist wouldn't go. Daisy plays on the organ at the metherdist church and Docky goes to see her. Mrs. Wry was over last night complainin about the new teacher. She says he hols

a mity tite rain over the scholars. I told her they never would get another teacher like you an she sed give you her lov. She was glad you got married so well. Bunny and bonny is grown but aint none of them marred. We fixed up the house since Docky got his job and dont keep no boarders except the transhunts. Next time you come to see your ma, be sure you come to see me. docky sends lov. I'll have to close. Give my loving respects to your husban. I forgot to tell you one of the willerby boys is del and Will Henry is study to be a preacher. Write soon. your frend, Cinthy Upshaw."

"I can fancy I have just come in from school," said Patsey, "and Mrs. Upshaw is relating the happenings around us. The poor new teacher has my sympathy. I will answer the letter at once. It is sweet in Mrs. Upshaw to remember me all these years and write to me."

"And please put in my appreciation of her matrimonial view, in return," said Ernest with affected gravity.

"She certainly believes in domestic bliss, and I know was relieved when the girls were married. It was too funny how she used to scheme to get beaux for Isabel and me."

"I'm thankful she failed in getting you a beau. But don't you think she is right about domestic bliss?" asked her husband, looking straight into her eyes with a smile.

"Yes," said Patsey, meeting his look with one like it. "But I think the teacher's profession is a noble one. My heart bleeds for the many neglected children whose parents seem scarcely to give them a thought after bringing them into the world; and those that amount to anything have such a struggle, rearing themselves."

"We both know about it, don't we, dear? but our precious children shan't if we can help it," he said taking her hand as they looked at the unobserving children on the floor. "This position pays so much better than my old one, I think we can begin to lay by something for rainy days. What does Lizzie say?"

"She has just gone back to her position, leaving things about as usual at home. Hiram came home for Sophia's wedding. They were sorry I couldn't be there."

"Hiram's a fine fellow. I think Wilson will promote him to cashier in the bank pretty soon."

"Yes, I wish Hershal and Jerry had been like him. Lizzie seems pleased with Sophia's marriage, but says such a life is not for her. Jody managed to go back to the State College. Mother's health is good, but Father is getting feeble."

"We'll go up and see them next summer, and bring Dot back with us and put her in school here."

"Yes, I'd like to, for I've always felt I was selfish in leaving home."

"It wasn't your fault, I took you away to keep you from killing yourself, and leaving me a bachelor for life."

"And I've had so much happiness, more than I deserve," murmured Patsey.

"You couldn't have as much as you deserve. But come, Mrs. Housekeeper, it's almost time for me to go back to the College, and we've had no dinner."

"Oh, I'd forgotten dinner," said Patsey, coming back to earth; "but it's all ready."

Ernest put his arm around his wife as they all passed into the dining-room.

"Come along, boys," he said. "Patsey, there never was anything half so sweet as our home."

And Patsey thought this was her best certificate.



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